Animal Birth Control Can Be Humane and Effective

Animal birth control is here! Early this year Dr. Jay Kirkpatrick and Dr. John W. Grandy, HSUS vice president for wildlife and habitat protection, made a whirlwind tour of New Jersey to discuss the control of animal populations through immunocare (the stimulation of female animals’ immune systems to produce antibodies that prevent fertilization). Kirkpatrick is a pioneer of animal immunocare and a vaccine that triggers it, which consists of porcine zona pellucida (PZP), a part of sows’ ova. In February he and Grandy described the new technique at a meeting at Coventry Farm attended by Princeton Township officials, journalists, and MARO supporters.

The surplus of dogs and cats is not the only animal-overpopulation problem. Each year the nation’s zoos must decide how to deal with their surplus animals. Some zoos have sold animals to middlemen who supply gun clubs with live targets. Bow-and-arrow and shotgun hunting to reduce deer herds are dangerous in densely populated communities, and sport hunting has a dismal record of controlling deer populations. Both officials and the public have been seeking safer, more-humane, and more-effective methods of controlling deer (see the Director’s Comment).

Kirkpatrick developed the new technique in collaboration with Irwin K. Liu of the University of California at Davis and John Turner of the Medical College of Ohio.

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Austenberg Receives Service Award

MARO Director Nina Austenberg was recently honored at the Long Branch Hilton in Long Branch, N.J., with a distinguished service award from the New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association. In presenting the award, Dr. Robert Shomer said, “From the Psalms, ‘One must prevent pain in any animal,’ and from the Torah, ‘A man must not eat his meal before giving food to his cattle.’ Nina Austenberg fulfills the measure of these commands and sees to it that others do so as well. For her mercy and compassion and her many alliances with our profession in fulfilling that which to her is no longer choice but a way of life, we confer this merit award.”

In accepting the award, Austenberg said, “Before many people heard about animal rights, there was Bob Shomer, fighting to ban the steel-jaw trap in New Jersey—a leader in this fight in our country. Before many heard about animal protection, there was Syd Rosenberg, building bridges for continued on page 2

Physiologist Jay Kirkpatrick (left) talks about deer control with New Jersey Assemblywoman Maureen Ogden and Princeton Township Committeeman Frederick Porter.
Humane Control Of Wildlife Guide Now Available

As we humans continue to encroach on the natural habitats of wildlife, the problems that arise from that coexistence present increasing challenges. Humane animal-control tactics that pose no threat to the environment are fast becoming preferred options. A collection of such tools is now available in a single volume: Pocket Guide to the Humane Control of Wildlife in Cities and Towns, edited by Gary R. Hodges of The HSUS. The guide describes humane methods of animal-proofing homes and controlling over 20 species of wildlife in urban areas. It was published by The HSUS with the generous assistance of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, whose grant to support Urban Wildlife programs also allowed us to develop an exhibit for a series of seminars, “Humane Solutions to Problems with Urban Wildlife.” You can order copies of the guide from the HSUS for $5 each. Enclose a check payable to The HSUS with your order, and please allow four weeks for delivery.

New Pet Laws Are Passed

According to Ed Blotzer of the Western Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Pittsburgh has passed laws that require the littering of puppies and kittens be registered with the city’s animal-control division within five days of birth, limit each household to two dogs, and establish that there is no fee for litter registration; increase the fines for the owner of a dog that bites someone while it is running loose from $75 to $350 for the first offense and from $350 to $1,000 for subsequent offenses; and impose stricter standards on breeders and kennels.

Animal Birth Control

Kirkpatrick and Turner began trying to use hormones as a contraceptive for animals 15 years ago but abandoned that approach after discovering the effects of PZP. The vaccine is administered via a dart from a tranquilizer gun or a blowgun. The dart injects the contraceptive and soon falls out. Kirkpatrick and his associates are encouraged by the success rate of the vaccine in wild horses—93 percent of the mares injected with it did not become pregnant. He said that they or others are testing the vaccine on animals at the Cologne, Germany, zoo, a hybrid orangutan at the Toledo, Ohio, zoo, bison at the San Francisco, Calif., zoo, wild horses on Assateague Island in Maryland, feral donkeys at Virgin Islands National Park, and a variety of booted animals, including Sika and Axis deer, at the Bronx, N.Y., zoo.

The vaccine permits animals to maintain their normal social structures; females mate but do not get pregnant. It proved to be safe when administered to pregnant wild mares on Assateague Island, all of which produced healthy foals. In addition, there is no problem with animals being inoculated more than once; they simply build up more immunity.

Scientists hope to develop a new delivery device: an injectable microcapsule coated with a material that erodes slowly so that the PZP is released gradually. Delivering a dose that lasts two years currently requires two shots. A one-shot dose that lasts two years is approximately three years away. The ultimate goal is a method for the oral delivery of the vaccine.

“There is no way you can do this with 300,000 animals,” Kirkpatrick told the group assembled at Coventry Farm, “but we may yet develop one that doesn’t preclude treating deer concentrations in specific areas, such as parks.” According to Kirkpatrick, “You have to view this method as a visionary. We have not yet dealt with animal populations with this nonlethal approach before, and we can see this as a light at the end of the tunnel. If we can go to the moon, surely we can find a better way to take care of animals.”

Animal Control Honored

Veterinarians Arthur Baeder and Syd Rosenberg flank Nina Austenberg as Robert Shomer presents her with an award for distinguished service from the New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association.

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DIRECTOR’S COMMENT

by Nina Austenberg

In November 1988 I had a letter from Quentin Schlieder, director of the Morris County (N.J.) Park Commission, asking me to serve on a wildlife advisory committee that would discuss deer damage, hunting, and alternatives.

Initially I was not happy with the makeup of the committee, which seemed to be weighted in favor of sport hunting. The other members were Charles E. Zafonte of the Morris County Park Commission, Hallie Connolly Aubin of Connolly Environmental, John Donahue of the Morristown National Historical Park staff, hunters’ representative Michael Ezzi, Harold Farrand of the Morris County Agricultural Development Board, Joseph Florio of the Jefferson Township Council, Stanley Simmis of the Morris Township government, Craig Witty of the Morris County park police department, and trial attorney Gary C. Algerie, who served as chairman of the committee. I quickly learned that our no-nonsense chairman would be honest and fair.

For nearly two years the committee met monthly or more often. We traveled to every park in the county and assessed the deer damage. Besides interviewing park personnel and park neighbors, the committee heard from representatives of the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, and Wildlife, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, and animal-protection groups as well as interested county residents. We accumulated boxes of newspaper clippings, reports, studies, and transcripts of testimony.

Ultimately the committee was split almost every issue. The most significant outcome was a unanimous decision to try to control the deer population at Frelinghuysen Arboretum through immunocontraception as soon as it was feasible to do so. The Morris County Park Commission led the county park systems of the nation by writing a $10,000 check to launch the project. Algerie was outstanding in his even-handed chairing of the committee. Schlieder, Zafonte, and the other members of the Morris County Park Commission get gold stars—and a special “thanks” for their sincere interest and unbiased participation in the discussions.

Although the committee didn’t agree on many things, the dialogue was healthy, and it sharpened my thinking. I respected the other members’ dedication and effort. I was eager for us to finish our report and stop the seemingly endless series of long, late meetings, but sometimes I miss the spirited discussions, the lovely vegetable sandwiches provided by the Morris County Park Commission, and the chance to watch the seasons change at the beautiful arboretum where we often met.

Unlicensed Facility Cited

In February the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that Adelphi operated as a research facility without being registered. The USDA had also charged that the university held its rabbits in housing that was poorly ventilated and not substantially impervious to moisture, that the primary enclosures were not clean and sanitary, and that there was no established program for the removal and disposal of animal waste. USDA had charged that during the period from December 2, 1987, to February 13, 1989, Adelphi operated as a research facility without being registered. The USDA had also charged that the university held its rabbits in housing that was poorly ventilated and not substantially impervious to moisture, that the primary enclosures were not clean and sanitary, and that there was no established program for the removal and disposal of animal waste.

A Good-bye to A Champion of Animals

Sometimes we lose someone who is not family but whom we regard as family. State Sen. Christopher J. Jackman was that kind of person. His “Hi, girls!” greeted us warmly in the halls of the New Jersey statehouse, and his efforts on behalf of animals were untiring.

At his funeral service, past New Jersey governors flanked his casket, as did legislators in both major parties—a testament to Christy’s nonpartisanship.

On many Saturdays and Sundays he met with animal protectionists to discuss strategy and legislation. Nobody will ever replace Senator Jackman. In 1981 he was awarded an HSUS certificate of appreciation on the assembly floor by the society’s president, John A. Hoyt.

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 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.