MOUNTAIN LIONS FACE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Governor Deukmejian’s veto of S.B. 76, which would have continued the moratorium on mountain lions in the state of California, was a blow to all who worked diligently to preserve these magnificent cats. The governor stated that they “should be treated like any other game mammal” and, as of January 1, 1986, they have been.

Beginning in April, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) will hold a series of hearings to set sport hunting guidelines, the first step toward “open season” on mountain lions. At a Sacramento hearing held early in March, the DFG recommended delaying setting hunting regulations for mountain lions until 1987. A department spokesman stated that biologists and game managers lack data on which to set hunting seasons this year on the state’s estimated 4,800 mountain lions, which have been protected since 1971.

At the same March hearing, department officials backed away from a proposal to kill all mountain lions in the North Kings area of Fresno County, in effect a “test” to determine whether the extermination of all mountain lions in the North Kings area, and 50% of lions in adjacent areas, would cause an increase in the deer herd population.

The WCRO and its members have registered their strong objections to the study with Jack Parnell, director of California State Department of Fish and Game, and our concern with a (continued on page 2)
statement in the study that "results of this study will have a direct application to many deer herds in California and greatly contribute to the health and welfare of deer in general in all western states."

On a related issue, the WCRO urges members to obtain a copy of the November 1980 report by the Auditor General's Office on the DFG. It details the ineptitude of the department's revenue collection procedures and the miserable failure in general of the DFG to carry out their ostensible function of protecting and conserving California's fish and game resources. While the department went to the legislature in April 1981 to request an additional $2 million, to be paid from the General Fund, and an increase in license fees to help offset the dwindling balance of the Fish and Game Fund, both of these requests were approved, the report shows that the DFG failed to collect an estimated revenue of $20 million and resulted in a $20 million decrease in revenue and income, due mainly to "poor administrative practices.

In response to the Auditor General's report, WCRO Director Char Drennon voiced concern that if the DFG cannot effectively manage the programs they now sponsor, how can it be expected they will set up and administer the North Kings deer herd program or the South Kings deer herd program in a manner as to obtain reliable and useful results? "Any study can be made to reflect a desired outcome. We can only expect that such a study will reflect the positions held by those with an interest in saving the deer and lion hunting," said Char Drennon.

The WCRO applauds the ten member organizations of the Nevada Federation of Animal Protection Organizations, Friends of Nevada's Mountain Lions, Wolf Advocates, and others whose recent efforts to protect mountain lions in that state was successful. In March, the Nevada State Board of Wildlife Commissioners voted unani­ mously to deny a proposal to legalise trapping of mountain lions on public lands and, in another vote, approved an ordinance prohibiting hunting of mountain lion kittens, and females with their young. Although it has been estimated that the mountain lion population in Nevada probably does not exceed 500 animals, the Nevada Depart­ ment of Wild­life still allows the hunting of mountain lions and has issued almost 200 permits in each of the past two years. Hunters killed 136 lions in 1985. The trapping proposal, which was supported by the Nevada Trappers As­sociation, deer hunters, and some ranchers who claimed such measures were necessary to protect livestock and wildlife, would have allowed the taking of mountain lions using cruel and non-selective steel-jaw leg-hold traps.

We wish to thank all HSUS members who wrote to the United States Depart­ment of Agriculture's General Office urging that it move forward with a hearing on the matter of James W. Hickey, a USDA-licensed animal dealer in California. On August 29, the Fall 1985 HSUS News.

According to the United States Office of General Counsel, Hickey is charged with 71 violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act. The complaint alleges Hickey kept records to keep in accordance with the law and animals were not cared for properly at his kennel. Hickey, a major supplier of animals to re­search laboratories, could face fines of $1,000 for each violation and suspen­sion of his license. He has 20 days in which to answer the complaint and the right to contest any of the charges.

Hickey's operation has been the target of investigation since 1984 for failing to properly identify dogs he had purchased for and failure to provide lighting and ventilation in his cat kennel, and a number of complaints from animal advocates and local animal control officials. Hickey purchased dogs that had been taken from owners' control and was accused of cruelly treating dogs. In addition, he was accused of failing to provide adequate medical care for dogs purchased from him.

Another investigation was conducted in 1984 by USDA through information obtained from the HSUS. Hickey was arrested on charges of animal cruelty and was released on a $50,000 bond. Hickey pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 18 months in a federal prison. Hickey was released in 1985 after serving 12 months of his sentence. Hickey is currently on probation.

In Jefferson County, Oregon, officials notified the WCRO that they were in the process of improving conditions at the county's dog pound, "closing the pound and sus­pending services would probably be the county's most prudent course of action."

That was just one of the recommendations made by WCRO Investigator Eric Sakach in a seven-page report sent to local animal control officials. Sakach con­sidered the Jefferson County dog pound in Madras, Oregon, early last December in response to numerous complaints of poor conditions for ani­mals and the county's method of killing unwanted animals—specifically, a gun­shot to the head. Sakach's report was most critical of the condition of the facility, the cleaning methods, the lack of formal training and record keeping, and the meth­ods of euthanising animals.

The WCRO has since been advised that the county would improve clean­ing procedures and public hearings would be held this spring to set a budget for the pound. The county will also support the proposal for an advisory bond. Unfortunately, the method of destroying animals may not change with the new state law that mandates lethal injections of barbiturates begin­ning January 1, 1987.

In September 1981, she was charged with a misdemeanor for creating a public nuisance in an incident involving 53 dogs. Roberts was allowed to retain her dogs and was given a fine of $275. Additional information may be ob­tained by contacting the West Coast Regional Office.

Northern California Ravaged by Floods

February 1986 will long be remem­bered in northern California as the month of floods when thousands of people in numerous communities in more than 12 counties, including Sac­ramento County, were forced to evac­uate, in some cases without any warn­ing. The storms that caused dams and rivers to swell, and a chain of devastat­ing floods to hit in the state, forced the lives of a number of people and count­less pets, livestock, and wildlife.

In the City of Yuba, the West Coast Regional Office was inundated with calls and reports from local human societies and animal-controlled agencies either needing assistance or offering help. While disaster relief ef­forts for people and animals went smoothly, with a high degree of organi­zation and cooperation in most of the affected areas of the state, efforts in other areas seemed confused and with­out resolve. Numerous instances of heroic efforts to save animal lives were marred by acts of indifference or callousness. "Disasters bring out the best and worst qualities in people," said WCRO Investi­gator Eric Sakach who, accompanied by HSUS Investigator Paul Miller and Martin Humane Society's Field Services Director, went to the area to contact local animal control officials in Yuba County. The communities of Linda and Olivehurst in that county were among the hardest hit in the state.

The disaster evoked an outpouring of help in the form of volunteers, pet food, kennel facilities, and veterinary assistance from local SPCA's and ani­mal rights groups in Sacramento, Yolo, and Yuba counties. Organizations seeking information on how to design a disaster relief plan should contact the WCRO.

Around The Region

SACRAMENTO, CALIF.—Kudos to all HSUS members who wrote in opposition to legalization of ferrets as pets in California. On March 7, 1986, the California Fish and Game Com­mission voted to leave California law per­taining to ferrets unchanged as it is and to permit private ownership of ferrets.

DONT MISS THESE Leadership Workshop The West Coast Regional Office will be hosting an HSUS leadership work­shop on September 5-7, 1986, in Sacramento, California. Workshop topics will include The HSUS's current issues, program development, exotic animals, cruelty investigation, humane educa­tion in high schools and colleges, and legis­lation. Workshop participants will accompany the sessions tour of the Sacramento Zoo. For more information on this exciting and educational event, contact the West Coast Regional Office as soon as possible.

HSUS Academy Comes to California Now is the time to make arrange­ments to attend the HSUS Animal Control Academy to be held September 15-16, 1986, at the Marin Humane Society in Novato, California. In cooperation with the University of Al­abama Division of Continuing Education's Law Enforcement Academy, this Academy offers training for animal control officers, humane agents, and others working in the field of animal control and care.

Cost for the eleven-day intensive program is $275. Additional information may be ob­tained by contacting the West Coast Regional Office.

Dog Pound Improvements Sought

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LAW LIMITS HOW DEPOSITS ARE SPENT
A.B. 1663, passed in California and in effect as of January 1, 1986, states that all animal shelters must take a deposit on dogs and cats in an amount not to exceed $30 for cats, and $40 for dogs and use the deposit for spaying or neutering. Dogs and cats over six months of age must be spayed or neutered within six months. Any under six months of age must be altered within six months.

This law changes the existing law by adding dogs, and by limiting how an agency can spend unclaimed deposits. Now, any deposit not claimed may be used only for 1) a public education program to prevent overpopulation of dogs and cats, 2) a program to spay/neuter dogs and cats, or 3) a follow-up program to assure that animals sold or given away by shelters are in fact spayed or neutered.

Our thanks to Peninsula Humane Society for sponsoring the bill and to HSUS members for their letters and calls supporting the legislation.

Judi Kukulka of the WCRO has just completed a study of California state humane officers following a request from Assemblyman Wally Herger for help on a bill to require educational training for such officers. Hereetofore, no one had correct figures on the numbers or legality of those appointed.

If you would like to receive timely alerts on animal legislation, join our HSUS Activist Program. All members are eligible and can join by contacting WCRO.

NEW AND CONTINUING CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION
S.B. 1405, authored by Senator David Roberti, is a two-year bill and would allow specially trained humane officers access to animal-research laboratories to check for compliance with state and federal laws.

S.B. 2438, authored by Senator Richardson, would except Nelson bighorn sheep from fully protected mammal status, thereby making them game mammals open to sport hunting. It should be opposed.

S.B. 2439, also authored by Senator Richardson, would lower the fee for a license to take elk to $100 and remove the protectionist language of the existing law. Humanitarians are urged to oppose it.

A.B. 2833, authored by Assemblyman Killea, would appropriate $4.5 million from the General Fund for California condor projects, the money to be split between the San Diego Zoo, the Los Angeles Zoo, and the California condor release project.

A.B. 3626, authored by Assemblyman Bradley, would make it a crime for anyone who uses animals in research to fail to provide for the humane care, treatment, or use of those animals.

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION
A.B. 1620, which passed, calls for more inspections of exotic animal exhibitors. It became law on January 1, 1986.
A.B. 1628, which failed before the Revenue and Taxation Committee, would have given an income tax deduction for spaying or neutering.

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