WCRO Spring 1987

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MILLIONS OF HOGS, CHICKENS SUFFER IN FOOD PRODUCTION

The average American consumed seventy pounds of pork products and more than eighty eggs last year. Although most consumers might prefer to think that their pork chops and hams came from pigs raised in some bucolic setting, the truth is the majority of hogs born each year spend part of their lives in some sort of confinement situation that results in unnecessary stress and suffering.

The West Coast Regional Office has found that few consumers are aware of the increasingly restrictive conditions under which the modern laying hen is maintained. It is ironic that, while egg consumption has actually dropped over the past ten years, the intensive management of laying hens has increased. In fact, the industry continues to overproduce eggs, often leading to the disposal of millions of eggs in order to stabilize prices.

The Humane Society of the United States is concerned with a number of humane issues having to do with the rearing of hogs. These include unnecessary confinement, early weaning (before the age of five weeks), tail docking, and castration without local anesthesia. Piglets are often placed in stacked cages or elevated platform decks in controlled-environment housing when they are weaned. Many of these piglets will have been weaned as early as three weeks, an extremely stressful practice that allows the sow to be rebred sooner. Although stacked decks save space, they are often overcrowded, causing stress and suffering. Decks are often situated over manure collection pits, or, as in the case of battery cages, over another pen of piglets.

The pigs are grouped into “finishing” (continued on page 2)

Sows are often held in narrow gestation crates in environmentally controlled buildings for their entire productive lives.

INSIDE

• Research Lab Opposed
• Washington Pound Seizure Update
• Legislative Activity

Trophy Hunters Take Aim at Mountain Lion

Thanks to Governor Deukmejian’s veto of S.B. 76, as reported in the Spring 1986 REPORT, California’s mountain lions face an even more desperate future.

This year the Fish and Game Commission will again hold hearings around the state to set game mammal hunting seasons. Mountain lions are now considered game mammals, and unless strident objections are voiced, may be hunted for trophies in the coming year. According to a recent press release, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has submitted a proposal that would allow trophy hunters to shoot as many as 210 lions in accordance with a state policy that requires the diversified use of wildlife, including sport hunting where appropriate.

Once again, the department and certain special interest groups are trying to convince the Fish and Game Commission that allowing trophy hunting will aid in wildlife management and help to protect livestock and the public. They argue that hunting will help to maintain mountain lion populations in a healthy, self-sustaining condition for the future; protect important habitat for the mountain lion and its primary prey, the mule deer; and help to manage the “mountain lion resource” to maximize public benefits and minimize problems and conflicts.

According to Char Drennon, director of the WCRO, “It is man who continues to (continued on page 3)
the usual method of disposing of un­chewed foreign eggs and surplus chicks (es­pecially males) needs immediate corrections. The current widespread practice is crush­ing or suffocating the chickens in garbage bags. There are alternatives to most existing battery cage systems. Researchers have found that debarking is not necessary if stock­docking in battery cages is lowered and when birds are selectively bred for lower ag­gression. Lowered cages and fewer birds in a cage are effective in preventing cannibal­ism and possibly feather loss and breast blisters. A low soda diet combined with light restrictions (six hours per day) has been used to keep hens in a second and final confinement without the forced molt trauma. The United Egg Producers has recommended the use of carbon dioxide for humane dis­posal of unwanted chicks.

That deep litter layering operations are supported in widespread use when they are used. Rogers will be assisting me with special emphasis on the increasing legislative de­mands. The WCRD is grateful for the tele­phone calls and letters from legislators, law enforcement personnel, animal-control agencies, humane societies and HSUS members telling us that, “if you hadn’t become involved,” those birds wouldn’t have been fed, that cruelly case won, or that bill passed.

My thanks to Senator David Roberti, who appointed me to a public member of the State of California’s Animal Health Technician Advisory Board. More and more Animal Health Technicians (AHTs) are working in humane societies and ani­mal-control shelters, and their presence means a higher standard of care for the ani­mals. The HSUS helped write the bill allow­ing AHTs to work in shelters.

We were very pleased to have been given an appreciation award by the Per­forming Animal Welfare Society for our first West Coast Regional conference on animal welfare. The conference was held at the University of Washington’s laboratories in Seattle.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The HSUS has launched a cam­paign to help end this suffering of hens and laying hens. You can help:

1. Write The HSUS for postcards and for your friends to sign and mail to the Governor of your state. The Egg Producers (and the United Egg Producers, in­forming them of your pledge and demand­ing humane reforms. These postcards—available from The HSUS, 2100 Oregon St., NW, Wash­ington, DC 20037 at $1 for 4 sets, $2.50 for 25 sets—also include a postcard to encourage your local grocer or restaurateur to offer hu­manely raised animal products.

Wheaton, Illinois, and the HSUS, working with the Wheaton Community Animal Care and Control. The Wheaton Community Animal Care and Control won an award for their efforts to make Wheaton a “no-kill” community, and the HSUS helped the Wheaton Animal Control Center become the first in the nation to be designated a “Humane” facility by the American Humane Association.

Mountain Lions (continued from page 1)

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Underground Research/UCB (continued from page 3)

Although the research community may disagree, these types of studies waste not only precious time, but millions of dollars annually, and also often provide wrong, redundant, or unnecessary information.

There are already close to 100,000 animals passing through Berkeley’s classrooms and laboratories each year. While the university has indicated that construction of the new facility will not result in an increase in the use of animals in instruction and research, the legislative analyst’s report states that plans for additional specialized containment facilities contradict those claims. The university has also stated that the Northwest Animal Facility is extremely important to regaining full accreditation by the American Association for Laboratory Animal Care—accreditation originally lost due to allegations of mismanagement and improper animal care.

According to Char Drennon, director of the WCRO, “The construction of the UCB Northwest Animal Facility is unnecessary and unjustifiable, not to mention a misuse of our tax dollars.” The West Coast office urges its members to join the many pro-animal groups, and the Mayor and City Council of Berkeley, in opposing construction of this facility. Please write to your elected representatives and ask them to vote NO on funding for Berkeley’s proposed research laboratory when it comes before them in March.

NEW LEGISLATION

Although the 1987 legislative sessions are just now gearing up, we are already looking forward to working on several worthwhile animal bills around the region.

As many of you probably already know, the WCRO maintains a separate mailing list for members who wish to become more actively involved in animal welfare issues by writing or calling their elected representatives. Our success with this list in California has been tremendous; however, due to a somewhat limited response from members, and shorter legislative sessions in the northwest, we are not able to report the same in Washington and Oregon. Since our response from members in the northwest on cruelty issues and news reports is so good, we know the interest is there.

We would really like to build up our activist list; letters and calls to state representatives from constituents make a great difference when fighting legislative issues. If you would like to join our Activist Team, please contact the WCRO.

■ CALIFORNIA:

S.B. 10—Senator Alan Robbins. Requires public animal shelters to provide helpful information to the owners and finders of lost pets and to maintain a “Lost and Found” list. Write to your state senator urging his or her support of this bill.

A.B. 128—Assembly Member Jack O’Connell. Prohibits dogs, and any animals except livestock and working dogs, from being carried in the backs of trucks unless they are in a transport container or safely cross-tied. Write to your assembly member urging his or her support.

A.B. 467—Assembly Member Tom Bates. Restores the protected mammal status of California’s mountain lions, making it unlawful to hunt them as trophies (see story, page 1).

A.B. 1358—Assembly Member Nolan Frizzelle. Under present law, humane societies and animal control agencies can own veterinary spay/neuter clinics as long as there is a licensed DVM as manager. This outrageous bill would make it illegal for any person or agency to own or lease a clinic except licensed veterinarians. Let the sponsor of the bill, the California Veterinary Medical Association, 5231 Madison Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95841; phone (916) 344-4985, and your Assembly Member and Senator know we don’t appreciate this attack on nonprofit agencies which are providing needed low cost services.

■ OREGON:

H.B. 2463—Introduced at the request of the Humane Society of the Willamette Valley. This bill will upgrade dogfighting from a Class A Misdemeanor to a Class C Felony, and make it a crime to attend a dogfight, or advertise equipment for the training and handling of fighting dogs. Please write to your state representative and ask him or her to support H.B. 2463.

H.B. 2403—Will remove an existing exemption on breeding and rearing gamecocks in Oregon for the purposes of out-of-state fighting, making it unlawful. Will also raise the penalty for animal fighting from a misdemeanor to a felony. Write to your state representative and ask him or her to support this bill.

■ WASHINGTON:

Three bills have been introduced in Washington that, combined, will give the state a strong new anti-cruelty statute, making it unlawful to cruelly overwork, torture, or torment any animal or deprive any animal of necessary sustenance. Write to your state senator, and tell him or her you are in favor of the new anti-cruelty statute, and ask for support of its passage.