WCRO Spring 2004
Managing Feral Cats in Sacramento

The problem of free-roaming and feral cats is reaching major proportions throughout our nation, and Sacramento is no exception. More than 75 million cats have found their way into U.S. homes. However, there are tens of millions more cats who struggle for survival as strays or ferals. The HSUS Safe Cats Program encourages cat caregivers to keep their cats indoors and offers suggestions for backyard play areas for cats. Millions of cats suffer and die needlessly, succumbing to disease, poisons, attacks by other animals, abuse by humans, or vehicle accidents because they are allowed to roam unsupervised. These cats are imps of an outdated perception that cats cannot be happy unless allowed outdoors alone. Cats permitted to roam freely outdoors not only face potential harm, but also have an unintended impact on a community's environment and wildlife. Free-roaming cats, even those who are well fed, kill wild animals.

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WCRO's Bob Reder helps a local cat advocate humanely trap feral cats in Sacramento.

Animal Rescues During the Firestorms

It was the event everyone had feared: The Santa Ana winds picked up and blew raging flames up mountainsides and into the communities of five counties in Southern California. Residents of San Bernardino, San Diego, Los Angeles, Ventura, and Riverside counties fled to safety as giant walls of flame roared toward their houses. At the request of San Bernardino County Animal Care and Control (SBCACC) and San Diego County Humane Society and SPCA, WCRO staff rushed personnel and supplies to help. WCRO's Eric Sakach, Cynthia Cutler, and John Dommers soon arrived on site in San Diego. Bob Reder and Carol Gay coordinated the allocation of resources, equipment, and supplies from WCRO's Sacramento office. Also joining in the rescue effort were several HSUS staff members from other regional offices and HSUS headquarters in Gaithersburg, Maryland, as well as other animal welfare organizations from Northern California, Oregon, Arizona, and Texas.

Working closely with San Diego County Animal Services, the HSUS team conducted damage assessment in the burnt communities of Crest and Valley Center. Team members answered animal-related questions and offered pet food and supplies to families burned out of their homes. Cutler had accompanied Sakach and other animal rescuers as their team canvassed one of the charred neighborhoods in Valley Center. As dusk fell, they came upon a house that had been surrounded by the fires. The flames had come right up to the backyard. From there, all anyone could see were charred, smoldering hillsides. A burned American flag flew at half-mast. Then a rescuer saw a black Lab tied to a small palm tree in the backyard with no food or water. The dog was frightened and barked as team members approached him. Then someone else glimpsed the silhouette of a black cat on the house roof. As the rest of the team freed the dog, Cutler worked on retrieving the cat.

"We were looking for ways to get the cat off the roof," she explained. "Nothing worked. So I drove our vehicle up to the garage, parked parallel, and climbed on top of the roof of the truck. I could tell the cat was apprehensive but wanted to come down. It only took a few minutes for him to gain my trust, and then he was safely in my arms." Cutler checked him for burns. Amazingly, he had survived the ordeal unharmed. The team took both animals to the shelter where they received veterinary care. Both pets were

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**Santa Barbara Man Charged With Four Counts of Felony Cruelty**

The complaints began coming to our office in July of 2003. More than 500 horses—many of whom were reported to us to have been starving—appeared to be languishing on a 1,200-acre ranch in Buellton, California. WCR0’s Bob Reder contacted the Santa Barbara County Animal Control and the district attorney’s office about the ranch, which was operated under the supervision of Slick Gardner. It is believed that Gardner collected these wild or feral horses from out of state and may have been planning to create a horse sanctuary.

As information and eyewitness accounts of sick, injured, and starving horses continued to flow into our office, Reder urged the county agencies to act quickly to determine the condition of the animals and intervene, should that be required to relieve their suffering.

With encouragement from the county supervisor, a joint investigation between the Santa Barbara District Attorney’s Office and the Santa Barbara Sheriff’s Office began in August and culminated in a legal search executed in early September in which authorities seized 70 horses because of their poor condition and need for special care.

In September, District Attorney Tom Saldana requested the execution of another search warrant. Reder was asked to observe and help ensure the humane treatment of approximately 500 horses that would be rounded-up, segregated, evaluated, and possibly seized. An additional 96 horses were seized during the second search. In Reder’s report to the district attorney, he noted that the law enforcement officers and their agents demonstrated patience and compassion while performing the difficult task of processing more than 500 horses.

The Santa Barbara District Attorney’s Office has charged Slick Gardner with four counts of felony animal cruelty, four counts of felony fraud, one count of felony grand theft, three misdemeanor counts of interfering with a peace officer, and one misdemeanor count of failing to follow a court order.

**Regional Wrap-Up**

**WCR0 Assists in Goat and Cat Rescues**

At the request of El Dorado County Animal Control, WCR0 Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler (below in photo) assisted in the rescue of 70 goats whom veterinarians determined were starving and neglected. A neighbor’s complaint initiated the investigation. All goats were health-screened, numbered, documented, and transported to the animal control shelter for treatment. Cruelty charges against the owner are pending. A few weeks later, WCR0 Regional Director Eric Sakach was assisted with the execution of a search warrant at a residence where 60 cats—many of whom required veterinary care—were housed in un Sanity conditions. Authorities seized 18 cats, and charges are pending against the owner.

**La Jolla Seals Just Want to Share**

La Jolla, California, to protect this small beach as a harbor seal resting area. The beach offers the seals their only high- and low-tide sheltered pupping and nursing area on the mainland south of Carpenteria. In fact, several seal pups were born on the beach this year.

WCR0 staff member John Dom­ners (left) discussed HSUS disaster services programs with Northridge area K9 Search and Rescue team members (L-R) Becky Dennis, Susanna Guitian, and Jerry Volkmann.

**WCR0 at Disaster Training Events**

Each year WCR0 staff members exhibit HSUS disaster preparedness materials for pets at a variety of special events and explain how HSUS’s disaster services team work. The first exhibit of 2004 helped to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Northridge, California, 6.7-level earthquake on January 17, 1994. Gelson’s Market and the Northridge West Neighborhood Council sponsored the event, designed to raise awareness about emergency preparedness in case of disaster. The thousands of local residents had a chance to meet and speak with dozens of exhibitors. For more information about disaster preparation, go to www.hsus.org/disasters.

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ore than 300 San Diego feral cats got a fix on March 14, 2004—spay/neuter fix, that is. The Feral Cat Coalition spayed or neutered 308 cats at the Rancho San Diego Animal Hospital in El Cajon, California, where the group held its first large-scale spay/neuter operation. According to Larry Boerner, spokesperson for the Coalition, the number set a world record. The event’s goal was to help reduce the area’s feral cat population. In a supporting role, WCRO’s John Dommers helped document the event with videotaping and photography. In addition, he donated a public address system that was used in the exhibit area. HSUS plans to assist with future feral cat Fixathons.

Volunteers prepare cats for surgery at the Fixathon in El Cajon, California. Feral Cat Coalition and Spay Neuter Action Project altered 308 cats during the event.

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All cats deserve permanent homes with responsible caregivers who keep them safely confined and meet their needs. The HSUS encourages all animal caregivers to make a commitment to responsible care for the life of their animals and offers assistance in solving common house cat problems. Many cats are abandoned because of their behavior. These cats may join existing feral colonies. In response to problems and complaints surrounding one feral cat colony in Sacramento, a coalition of government and non-government organizations has formed to humanely mitigate the situation. In addition to WCRO, members of this coalition include the Sacramento City Animal Care and Control, Happy Tails Cat Rescue, the City Parks and Recreation Department, and the Sacramento Area Animal Coalition. Historically, animal control agencies have approached the problem by humanely trapping, neutering, and releasing the cats. In some cases blanket euthanasia was used. The Sacramento project has adopted the Trap, Test, Vaccinate, Alter, and Release, and Microchip (TTVAR-M) method recommended by The HSUS.

"It is the management component that separates this program from the others," said WCRO’s Rob Radez. "It is crucial that feral cat colonies be well managed for the optimal health and safety of the cats and the environment. The goal of this program is to reach zero population through natural attrition. Only cats with incurable diseases or serious injuries will be euthanized, and, of course, all will be altered, evaluated for adoption, and vaccinated.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about:
Making a memorial donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or relative. Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency. Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

Send to:
THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
1300 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Suite 202
Washington, D.C. 20005-1400

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 95841-0001

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
Sacramento, CA 94284-9001

Captive-breed parrots are afforded more protection under a new California law scheduled to go into effect this fall.

Legislative Update

California

- Restriction on the sale of baby birds. Introduced by Assemblywoman Ellen Corbett (D) of Alameda County, A.B. 202, which will become effective September 1, 2004, prohibits pet stores from selling unweaned parrots. This law will also apply to bird sales at swap meets or other commercial ventures. Pet stores may also not possess an unweaned parrot unless they employ at least one person who has completed the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council’s avian certification program.

- Veterinarians now permitted to issue dog licenses. In an effort to raise dog licensing compliance, Assemblyman Robert Durron (R) of Rancho Cucamonga introduced A.B. 326, which allows county supervisors or animal control departments to authorize veterinarians in their jurisdiction to issue dog licenses. The measure passed.

- State agencies urged to develop vegetarian school lunch policy. A resolution by Assemblyman Joe Nations (D) of Marin urges all state agencies to develop school lunch plans that include daily vegetarian options.

- Special vehicle license plates. A provision for a special interest license plate that would benefit spay/neuter programs was included in Assembly Bill 3137, introduced by Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (D) of Van Nuys. A.B. 1118 passed the Assembly and is on to the Senate. Please show your support for this needed bill that will provide spay/neuter programs throughout the state, by sending a letter to Assemblyman Levine at his office, California State Assembly, P.O. Box 942849, Sacramento, CA 94249-0001.

- Hayden Bill provisions suspended. The Hayden Bill (S.B. 1785) aimed to improve conditions and adoptive homes for the disabled animals. But it came with a price tag that the state is not willing to pay. While lawsuits are pending and the state is enduring a budget crisis, the provisions pertaining to holding periods have been suspended. Shelters may revert to the three-day stay holding period instead of five days prescribed by the Hayden Bill.

Captive-breed parrots are afforded more protection under a new California law scheduled to go into effect this fall.

- Ban on declawing exotic or wild cats. Assemblyman David Koorz (D) of West Hollywood has introduced A.B. 1857, which would make it a misdemeanor for any person to perform, procure, or arrange for the surgical removal of claws of any exotic or native wild cat. The American Veterinary Medical Association guidelines oppose such procedures. Please show your support by sending a letter to Assemblyman Koorz, California State Assembly, P.O. Box 942849, Sacramento, CA 94249-0042.

- Fecally animal cruelty. S.B. 3137 and its companion H.B. 2795 propose to make aggravating cruelty to animals a class C felony for anyone who intentionally or knowingly commits certain acts of animal cruelty. A very important provision in this bill allows the court to order counseling for a person convicted of animal cruelty. The HSUS and the Hawaiian Humane Society support these bills.

Regulations Update

For many years, The HSUS has been committed to helping residents and pets live together successfully in multi-family housing.

Since 1983, senior citizens and people with disabilities living in certain federally subsidized housing projects have been allowed to have pets. In 1998, that privilege was extended to all residents in federally-assisted housing. We have until August 23 to comment on the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) proposed regulations, which, as written, seriously jeopardize the success of this effort.

Please contact the Office of the General Counsel, Rules Docket Clerk, Rm. 1029R, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20410-0500 to urge them to require spaying and neutering of companion animals in federally and locally-subsidized housing; to establish “pet committees” to oversee the day-to-day operation of pet ownership policies and enforcement of the pet rules; to ensure that pet rules protect the safety, health, and well-being of pets as well as the people; to enact procedures such as declawing or removing an animal’s vocal cords as conditions of pet ownership.
Director’s Report

By Eric Sakach
Director of the West Coast Regional Office

Looking Back and to the Future: The HSUS Commemorates a Half Century of Animal Protection

Fifty years ago, a small and dedicated group of humanitarians recognized that very little was being done about the horrific cruelties endured by animals in food production, research, and in the name of sport and entertainment.

The founders of The HSUS were convinced that the humane movement had to develop the capacity to attack national and regional cruelties that were often beyond the scope of any local humane organization or even any state or federal agency. Since 1954, The HSUS has emerged as the largest and most influential animal protection organization in the world.

Through our work over the past half century, The HSUS has prevented cruelty, alleviated suffering, and saved the lives of countless animals.

For many of those animals, relief came when HSUS staff members physically responded to their plight—whether during animal rescue operations in one of the many disasters we’ve responded to or during the course of one of the hundreds of cruelty cases in which we’ve been involved. While much of our work has been reported in the pages of our various publications and the regional newsletters, there’s a good chance you’ve also read or heard something about the animal protection efforts of The HSUS in the media.

Pouring through historical documents and pictures in preparation for this column was both exciting and revealing. I was overwhelmed by how much has been accomplished. There were far too many achievements to list within this small space, but they are certainly worthy of mention. A compilation of these highlights from the early years to the present is at www.hsus.org/wcro.

Animals were helped in other ways that might not be immediately measurable, but which are just as important—maybe even more so. I am referring to our ongoing educational, legal, and legislative efforts on the local, state, and federal levels.

In 1957, The HSUS embarked on a program to open a self-supporting branch in every state. These offices were first incorporated in Connecticut, New Jersey, Utah, Minnesota, Virginia, California, Texas, Illinois, and Maryland. As the organization’s influence grew, so did the demand for HSUS involvement in other states. In the early 1970s, HSUS President John Hoyt conceived the idea of creating regional offices across the country to provide better service to all states. The West Coast Regional Office was among the first seven offices to open.

As I reflect on my nearly 28 years working with The HSUS, the first 19 of which I served as both a regional and national investigator, I am proud to have been part of an organization that has been instrumental and often directly responsible for making advances on so many fronts.

Today, in addition to our headquarters in Washington, D.C., and an operations center in Gaithersburg, Maryland, The HSUS has 10 regional offices strategically located across the country; 250 staff members, including veterinarians, wildlife biologists, lawyers, animal behaviorists, investigators, and other professionals. And because animal issues increasingly extend beyond America’s borders, we also have an international arm.

Because of the more than eight million people who, like you, care deeply about animals and understand the importance of building a strong organization, the animals have gained a voice that will no longer be ignored by the industries that exploit them or the political leaders who represent us.

Of course, our work is far from finished. The problems animals face and the suffering they endure in these changing times involve staggering numbers and increasingly complex issues. Today, when one in every 50 Americans supports The HSUS, we can say with certainty that we are moving closer to the realization of a truly humane society.

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