Weathering a Second "Storm"

Every dog needs a home. And every home needs a dog—or two or three. But not 477! Authorities found that many dogs at Every Dog Needs a Home (EDNAH) "sanctuary," in Gamaliel, Arkansas. More than 100 of the animals had been rescued from Hurricane Katrina and shipped to EDNAH upon checking references, which appeared to vouch for owners Tammy and William Hanson. The HSUS had declined to send Katrina survivors from temporary shelters it was running to EDNAH.

Conditions at EDNAH were typical of a hoarding case, yet there were no buildings or residence. The only water on the property came from an old well, and electricity was limited. Most of the dogs were contained in two large open enclosures. Many others were loose and unsocialized. None had wholesome food or adequate water and shelter. Males and females kept on page 3.

These "Barkansas" dogs are happy to see WCRO's Inga Gibson, who helped care for them and nearly 500 others after they were found in deplorable conditions.

Stories from the "Year of Disasters"

Paul Bruce's Story: Mending Mississippi

When Hurricane Katrina smashed into the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, the small coastal town of Waveland, Mississippi, was hit by a 40-foot storm surge that destroyed 90 percent of the homes, took an untold number of human lives, and drowned most of the animals at the Hancock County animal shelter.

I spent two weeks in Waveland as part of HSUS's massive response to the unprecedented disaster. While there, I directed a temporary shelter that rescued, fed, and sheltered more than 500 animals, provided veterinary care to hundreds more, and distributed literally tons of animal food and supplies. Animals brought to the shelter were held for two or three days, then transferred to Hattiesburg to await reunion with their owners or placement in foster care.

Conditions were primitive, and daytime temperatures reached 100 degrees with humidity at 90 percent or greater. Animal control workers from across the country worked 16-hour days setting humane traps, picking up strays, and answering calls for assistance. Shelter and veterinary personnel provided care 24 hours a day for up to 60 animals at a time. Huge supplies of dog and cat food, horse pellets, hay, veterinary and continued on page 2.

Oregon, Washington: Welcome!

The HSUS's Pacific Northwest Regional Office (PNRO) has recently closed in an effort to improve the efficiency of all the regional offices, and Oregon and Washington are now being served by WCRO. Former PNRO Program Coordinator Inga Gibson has joined the WCRO staff as a state coordinator working out of the Seattle area.

Remember that WCRO is your office if you live in one of the following states: California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, or Washington.
Storm Stats

Because of the personal sacrifices of staff and volunteers, HSUS was able to step into the crisis, leading a massive search and rescue effort that saved more than 10,000 abandoned, hungry, and frightened animals in Louisiana and Mississippi. We provided the sheltering expertise necessary for managing major temporary facilities in both states. We deployed hundreds of trained volunteers and provided the logistical support needed to effectively manage the process of public affairs reform needed to avert the tragedy in the future. The Louisiana Exposition Center in Baton Rouge, a multi-purpose equestrian and events complex just 25 miles west of New Orleans, was deployed there for two, eight-day stints in mid-September 2005. The emergency animal shelter had been established just a week prior to our arrival. Volunteers poured in to care for the hundreds of animals arriving daily from all parts of southeast Louisiana, mostly from New Orleans. At the beginning of September 10, 2005, we saw perhaps the greatest one-day influx of displaced animals in disaster history. The train of more than 70 animal transport vehicles stretched from the intake tent all the way out to the entrance of the facility. That night alone, 177 dogs received

25 miles away. He returned the next day, happily wagging his tail after a blood transfusion and a dose of wormer for the load of hookworms that had nearly taken his life. The sweet, nameless rotweiler with the limp, nerve-damaged foreleg became known simply as Buddy. His brave, gentle nature charmed all who met him. Left with rescuers to get the surgery he needed and to begin the rest of what is certain to be a very pamerpered life.

Reunions were the highlight of any day. At 6:30 one morning, a gentleman came in with his eight-year-old son, looking for his dog. Tears flowed freely as they determined (and the dog confirmed) that we had indeed found their dog. Max. Later, a large man with a booming voice came in and said, “I’m hoping you found my two dogs.” Immediately, two dogs at opposite corners of the kennel began barking and jumping up and down in their pens. “Might it be those two?” joked a worker as the jubilant owner and staff celebrated another family reunited.

What started as a primitive camp with a sheet metal roof, a generator, a hose, and a dozen die-hard volunteers had grown into a bustling shelter with air-conditioned cat cages, large exercise runs, a mobile surgery unit, a communications center, showers, a mess tent, and more than 35 volunteers and staff. The camp was abandoned at the imminent approach of Hurricane Rita, after making some memorable reunions like those mentioned here possible.

Curt Rasmson’s Story: One Among Thousands

Working at the temporary animal shelter the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, Louisiana, following Hurricane Katrina was the most memorable experience of my 32-year career. This cooperation of national and local animal protection groups, agencies, and individuals was an intense turning point for the future of disaster response and animal welfare.

The Lamar-Dixon Expo Center is a huge multi-purpose equestrian and events complex just 25 miles west of New Orleans. I was deployed there for two, eight-day stints in mid-September 2005. The emergency animal shelter had been established just a week prior to our arrival. Volunteers poured in to care for the hundreds of animals arriving daily from all parts of southeast Louisiana, mostly from New Orleans. At the beginning of September 10, 2005, we saw perhaps the greatest one-day influx of displaced animals in disaster history. The train of more than 70 animal transport vehicles stretched from the intake tent all the way out to the entrance of the facility. That night alone, 177 dogs received...
shots, microchips, and veterinary examinations. The following morning, there were more than 2,300 animals at the facility, making the place the largest animal shelter in the world.

This was overwhelming, but one incident makes this night all the more memorable. A woman came to Lamar Dixon sobbing because she was not allowed back to her apartment to retrieve her cat. It had been 10 days since Katrina struck. She gave me the address and told me that her longhaired, white cat was in the upstairs apartment, probably hiding under the bed.

For several more days I kept in contact with the Louisiana SPCA, officers who repeatedly rescued animals amid horror conditions. Every day the owner came to Lamar Dixon to look for her cat and contact me for any news. Each time she would collapse in tears. She was now homeless, and the only thing that kept her going was the hope of finding her baby. Communication problems and logistical frustrations prevented anyone from getting into the apartment complex. But early one morning I was able to personally contact the SPCA and give them the woman’s address and description of the cat. We both knew it was the unlikely cat was “still alive at this point.”

I didn’t hear anything until the next afternoon, when she called to tell me they found me. She collapsed into my arms, sobbing and saying that she found her baby and that I had saved her life. There was not a dry eye in the house.heart in each other’s heart.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it became clear that animal issues are a major consideration during disaster evacuations. As a result, The HSUS has devised a plan to expand its disaster services program both domestically and internationally. In addition to adding dedicated staff members, including a specialized “cat team,” The HSUS will purchase state-of-the-art emergency equipment to enable teams to be self-sufficient and able to respond without draining local resources. Training for volunteers will be enhanced, and cooperative efforts among national, state, and local agencies will continue to be a priority, as will seeking to pass legislation that improves care for animal issues in disasters.

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females were together, resulting in pregnant females and mixed breeds. Aggressive dogs fought with fearful ones, causing injuries. Many suffered from mange, internal parasites, and other medical problems. Some were found dead. The purposefully-constructed, remote location had kept the neglectful situation hidden for years.

The Baxter County Sheriff’s Office granted The HSUS temporary custody of the animals in order to clean up the site, care for the animals remaining there, and allow time to prepare criminal charges. What began as a two-week project stretched into six weeks, with about 30 staff and volunteers working at “Project Barkansas” every day. With help from United Animal National volunteers and the local community, we cleaned up the site and cared for the animals. WCR0’s Regional Coordinator Curt Ransom and State Coordinator Inga Gibson spent weeks at EPPH acting as animal handlers and caregivers, and assisting with temporary construction, cleanup, operations, and logistics. By the resolution of the case, well over $100,000 had been spent.

“It was difficult to find the animals in such horrendous conditions,” Gibson said. “Thanks to the daily work of the wonderful team of volunteers and staff, the dogs made dramatic improvements—demonstrating their amazing resilience and longing to trust and enjoy people again.”

Near the end of November, Baxter County Judge Van Gearhart remanded the animals into the HSUS’s custody so they could be moved off the property into permanent homes. The Project Barkansas team returned some of the animals to their original owners and transported the rest to stable, well-screened agencies for immediate adoption into loving homes. Thanks to the efforts of the Baxter County Sheriff’s Office and with the help of The HSUS’s staff members who helped build the case, the Hansons were charged with 27 counts of cruelty to animals. The case was heard on January 16, 2006, and Judge Gearhart found the two guilty on 20 of the 27 counts. Part of his ruling ordered that the Hansons not own any pets “anywhere in the world.”

As a result, the Baxter County Sheriff’s Office and the HSUS worked together to find new homes for the animals. The HSUS’s Animal Care Expo also attracted the largest gathering of animal care and control professionals and volunteers in the world. In recent years, conference attendees have reached 1,500, attracting professionals from all 50 states and nearly 30 countries.

Regional Wrap-up

MudBay Saves the Day

Midday, the largest northwestern retailer of healthy pet food, made a donation to The HSUS for northwest shelters that assisted with hurricane relief efforts. The generous donations were raised through MudBay’s Gulf Coast Disaster Relief Project. Funds were collected through in-store donations from compassionate customers and then matched by MudBay. The HSUS is distributing these funds to northwestern shelters that helped hundreds of animals following the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Alleged Cockfighter Jailed for Domestic Violence

According to news reports obtained by WCR0, accused cockfighter promoter Richard Bohn of Fiddletown, California, was jailed in late November after being accused of domestic violence. Bohn is currently facing charges stemming from a May 15, 2005, raid on a cockfighting derby held at his California Game Farm (see fall 2005 WCR0 National News”). According to the “Amador Ledger Dispatch,” Amador County sheriff’s deputies arrested Richard Bohn at about 9:30 p.m., Sunday, November 27, 2005, at his Mount Whitney Drive home after a dispute with his estranged wife, Gina May Bohn. Richard Bohn was also charged with corporal injury to a spouse, threatening a witness, and for receiving an allegedly stolen shotgun.

Amador County deputies arrested about 30 people during the May 15 cockfighting derby while an equal number escaped into the surrounding hills. Gina Bohn, who has since filed for divorce, was also arrested, and she pleaded no contest November 3 to one count of bringing a minor to a cockfight. About a dozen men have been convicted of attending the cockfight thus far. A trial date for Richard Bohn has not yet been set.

Nothing Goofy About This Expo

This year The Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California, served as the site for Animal Care Expo, the premier international educational conference and trade show for animal sheltering professionals. Hosted by The HSUS and held March 8–11, 2006, the goal of the annual event is to help people working in the fields of animal sheltering, care, and control do their jobs better and more efficiently.

Featuring dozens of specialized workshops and day-long courses, the trade show allows animal shelter professionals to learn about the latest and best products and services in the field. Animal Care Expo also attracts the largest gathering of animal care and control professionals and volunteers in the world. In recent years, conference attendance has reached 1,500, attracting professionals from all 50 states and nearly 30 countries.

I want to learn how we 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. 

Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS. Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

Promoting the protection of all animals.
impossible thanks to the nightly cacophony of continuously running generators and barking dogs, and the early morning visits by armed military units patrolling for looters. Still, we were glad to be there. A week later, I transferred management of the shelter to Paul Bruce’s capable hands as I received word that I was to be redeployed to Louisiana.

The Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales, Louisiana, served as the primary sheltering facility for animals rescued from New Orleans. By the time I arrived, it was a bustling operation with staffers from several national groups, teams of veterinarians, and hundreds of volunteers. The massive steel barns at the center were home to about 1,000 animals displaced by Katrina at any given time. Melissa Rubin, HSUS vice president for field services, was the outgoing incident commander (IC) at Lamar-Dixon. She quickly got me up to speed. But within several days of having assumed IC duties at Lamar-Dixon, I received reports that Hurricane Rita was poised to hit Texas and Louisiana with nearly the same ferocity as Katrina. While we were away from the storm’s eye, we were still going to feel Rita’s wrath, and we had to prepare.

While we were confident that the steel, open-air barns on the Lamar-Dixon grounds could withstand high winds, we positioned tractor trailers around the sides of the structures to form a protective barrier to keep the animals safe from flying debris and to reduce the chance that vehicles could be overturned. All supplies including food, crates, equipment, and pet carriers were loaded into the trailers to keep them undamaged.

Once preparations for the hurricane were completed, the number of staff and volunteers on-site was scaled down to 50 to care for the animals. Those of us who remained also had to deal with two tornado warnings in the Gonzales area. Workers were forced to find shelter in bathrooms in the barns and wait out the threat of twisters. Thankfully,

no one was injured.

The weather not only slowed down our work of rescuing and sheltering animals, but Rita’s rains also opened up breaches in previously damaged levees in New Orleans, pouring water into the Ninth Ward, which had already sustained heavy flooding. The rising water levels made it even more difficult for animal rescuers. Once Rita had passed, we were able to resume animal exports to outside shelters, allowing additional animals to be brought into Lamar-Dixon.

Aside from the privilege of working with the many dedicated volunteers and professionals I met in Mississippi and Louisiana, the most encouraging thing about my experience happened when I learned that emergency officials in Texas had urged evacuees from Hurricane Rita to take their pets with them, and that many animal shelters in south Texas evacuated ahead of time.