WCRO Summer 1992

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Recommended Citation
"WCRO Summer 1992" (1992). West Coast Regional Office. 44.
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Cockfight Raid Nabs 212; Most Plead Guilty

In mid-January members of the Sutter County Sheriff’s Department SWAT team, the WCRO, Sutter County Animal Control, and California Highway Patrol aerial units descended on a cockfighting derby in progress near Yuba City, Calif., and apprehended more than two hundred of the estimated three hundred persons present. Approximately 125 live gamecocks were seized as evidence, along with $31,599 in cash, an assault rifle, drug paraphernalia, and illegal cockfighting implements.

"In addition to two cockfighting arenas and gambling records, we also found a dirt pit containing about 75 dead gamefowl, many of which had been killed that day," said WCRO Investigator Eric Sakach, who assisted in the raid. "An especially disturbing aspect of this case was the number of children in attendance. Not only were they subjected to the violent atmosphere inherent in cockfighting, but some were actually left behind by adults who fled the scene during the raid."

Most of the defendants in the case have pleaded guilty to charges ranging from being present at an illegal exhibition to possessing gamecocks for fighting purposes. Their fines have ranged from $211 to $1,296 and twenty-four months’ informal probation. About thirty defendants have continued on page 2

Form Gives Pet Buyers Valuable Data

Under the new Lockyer-Polanco-Farr Pet Protection Act, purchasers of puppies from retail pet stores are required to receive a full-disclosure form at the time of the sale.

The form, prescribed by the State Department of Consumer Affairs, will be available this spring. WCRO Investigator Kurt Lapham met with Consumer Affairs staff members, a representative of the pet industry, and a representative of the Dog Council of Sacramento to finalize the disclosure form. The form requires that retail pet stores list the animal’s breeder and place of origin, and the answers to a number of health-related questions.

The disclosure form is only part of the wide-reaching Pet Protection Act that, in addition, outlines how animals will be examined while in the pet store, what remedies are available for those who purchase an ill animal, and what records must be kept by the retail pet store. The act is the result of years of work by the WCRO and continued on page 4
Cockfight Raid
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failed to appear; bench warrants have been issued for them. Special thanks go to the Sutter County Sheriff’s Department and Department of Animal Control and the California Highway Patrol.

The Sutter County bust came barely two weeks before the California Assembly Ways and Means Committee was to hear a bill that would have made it more difficult to prosecute those involved in cockfighting. WCRG Director Charlene Drennon credited the well-timed raid with helping to defeat the bill.

Sakach pointed out that other crimes are frequently associated with cockfighting. In addition to evidence of illegal gambling and weapons, drugs are often found during raids. In March San Luis Obispo County sheriff’s deputies seized twenty-seven guns and assault weapons in a cockfight raid. A U.S. attorney and drug-enforcement agents stated that major drug networks involving marijuana and methamphetamine trafficking have been tied directly to cockfighting. Violence has also increased, including a gang rape and at least nine hernias since 1987.

Sixteen states now carry felony penalties for cockfighting and other states have recently successfully prosecuted cockfight promoters under racketeering statutes.

A Corbetti tiger like this one at the Cincinnati Zoo died in transit from Asia to Los Angeles; it was one of only two hundred in the world. The HSUS is calling for closer public scrutiny of zoo-management plans to avoid such tragedies in the future.

New Law Punishes Those Who Steal Animals for Slaughter

Another new California law is proving to be worth the effort expended to get it passed. This year California Penal Code §487g was amended to include as a misdemeanor violation the taking of any animal by any false representation or pretense for the purposes of medical research or slaughter. The code originally included only dogs who were stolen for purposes of medical research or other commercial uses. The new version includes any animal and, in addition, includes animals taken for slaughter.

The law has already been used in a case in which a person asked a horse owner if he/she could use the horse for a child to ride. The person then turned around and sold the horse to a killer buyer, who sold the animal for eventual slaughter. After contacting WCRCO Investigators Mark Jouett and Tom Gorham, a local humane officer learned of the new code section. A criminal complaint has since been filed with the district attorney’s office.

“It’s gratifying to be able to use a new code that was passed specifically to deal with a growing problem. It makes all the work individuals and organizations do to get legislation passed worthwhile, especially in cases where we might otherwise not be able to prosecute,” said Lapham.

Both this law and the Pet Protection Act are designed to deal with situations that were previously “untouchable,” due either to the lack of a written law or because the existing law did not clearly specify how it should be applied. The WCRCO salutes all who wrote letters, made calls, and testified before legislative committees in getting these laws passed.

Tiger Shipped from Malaysia
Found Dead in Los Angeles

After receiving an anonymous phone tip about the death of a Corbetti tiger shipped from a wild-animal park in Malaysia to the San Diego Zoo in late February, WCRCO Director Char Drennon contacted the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and asked for a Freedom of Information Act report on the incident. Most wildlife authorities claim there are only two hundred Corbetti tigers in the world. The San Diego Zoo had ordered two and was planning on having a joint breeding program with the Cincinnati Zoo. According to the USDA report, the dead tiger arrived in Los Angeles in a crate that had air holes only at one end. That end had been partially wrapped in plastic. The crate was only three inches longer than the tiger it contained. The second tiger, tracked from the Los Angeles Airport to the San Diego Zoo, was put in quarantine and noted as being stressed and dehydrated.

Drennon sent a copy of the report to a press source asking if there had been any news coverage during the intervening weeks. Since there had not been, Tom Gorman of the San Diego bureau of the Los Angeles Times contacted both the USDA and the San Diego Zoo. Zoo Press Relations Director Jeff Jouett was quoted as saying he “was mad as hell” at the shippers of the tiger and the zoo is looking into a lawsuit. The HSUS is looking into federal violations. According to Jouett, the tigers were shipped from Malaysia without anyone accompanying them. Drennon asked, “Why would anyone ship two of only two hundred in the world of anything, from Malaysia on a twenty- to forty-eight-hour ordeal, without sending someone to ensure the tigers were shipped safely and humanely? This doesn’t make sense.”

The zoo said it plans to obtain another Corbetti tiger for its breeding program. Coincidentally the Los Angeles Zoo’s famed sixteen-year-old African bull elephant, Hannibal, died in late March in a crate awaiting shipment to a zoo in Mexico. Zoo Director Mark Goldstein, who has only been on the job a few months, told Drennon all precautions had been taken and no one knows why, after moving continued on page 3

Animal Care Expo ’93, a Huge Success

More than 1,200 animal-care, sheltering, and control professionals from across the country converged at Bally’s Casino Resort in Las Vegas in February to attend the first HSUS animal care expo, a resounding hit. The first-of-its-kind educational event featured more than one hundred exhibitor displays, an international showcase of the latest equipment and products for animal-sheltering and animal-control programs. Participants attended workshops on a wide variety of topics of interest to managers and staff of humane societies and animal-control agencies.

Mark your calendars for March 17–20, 1993, for Animal Expo ’93, to be held at the Twin Towers Hotel in Orlando, Fla. We expect the next expo to be an even greater hit with animal-care professionals.

For more information about Expo ’93, call 1-800-246-EXPO (3976).

Tiger Found Dead
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easily into the crate, Hannibal dropped to his knees an hour-and-a-half later. Attempts were made to put him back on his feet, but even when raised, he wouldn’t stand. Zoo veterinarians made the decision to let him rest. He was found dead at 5:30 the next morning.

The HSUS believes zoo-management plans should be made public. Zoo transfers must be reviewed by a city advisory board. The Los Angeles Zoo has had a poor record of compliance with the Animal Welfare Act for several years. The zoo has begun to comply fully with the act only since March 1992. Drennon said, “We worked with Sen. Dan McCorquodale trying to get good state laws on elephants. McCorquodale did manage to pass a very moderate bill which makes some elephant abuses a misdemeanor, but after Myra the elephant fell into the mud at the San Diego Zoo in December 1990, zoo and circus representatives flatly refused to support S.B. 310.”

McCorquodale called a meeting with representatives from the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey; and the California Association of Zoos and Aquariums to reach a compromise, but the zoo and circus representatives eventually refused to compromise.

“After incidents like these, the inescapable conclusion is that even the best trained, best staffed, and most prestigious zoos have more public exposure and use to earn more common sense,” said Drennon.

Tiger Shipped from Malaysia
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LEGISLATIVE LINEUP

CALIFORNIA

A.B. 500: Provides humane standards for the transportation of horses in California, including banning the use of double-decked and possum-bellied cattle trucks. Support.

A.B. 1660: Requires veterinarians at all rodeos in California. Support.

A.B. 1740: Sets up a new definition in the California food and agriculture code of “exotic livestock” to include ostriches. This would allow ostriches, like cattle, to be exempt from state sales tax. Oppose.

A.B. 1835: Supports the federal Dolphin Protection Consumer Information Act by making unlawful the sale in California of any tuna product not labeled as dolphin safe. Support.

A.B. 2450: Weakens the endangered and threatened species lists in California by preventing the fish and game commission from listing a species until a recovery plan is adopted. (Such a requirement is like refusing to recognize a disease until a cure is discovered.) Oppose.

A.B. 2817: Makes horses an agricultural commodity and promotes them for export. As most horses are exported for slaughter, the bill puts the state in the business of supporting the slaughter of horses for meat. Oppose.

A.B. 3088: Major legislation introduced by Assemblyman Jack O’Connell to mandate sterilization of cats and dogs adopted from shelters. This bill is an important step in reducing the enormous surplus of companion animals and correcting past abuses of spay/neuter deposits. Support.

A.B. 3175: Provides minimum exercise requirements for any equine confined for at least four hours per week to an enclosure no larger than twelve feet by twenty-four feet. Support.

A.B. 3259: Requires that milk from cows injected with bovine growth hormone be labeled in California “Adulterated product. Produced with the use of growth-promoting compounds.” Support.

A.B. 3429: The horse-slaughter industry is already attempting to weaken last year’s very successful A.B. 1900 with this year’s A.B. 3429. A.B. 1900 has already been used to return horses from as far away as Texas and Nevada illegally sold for slaughter. A.B. 3429 would substantially weaken enforcement by restricting the application of A.B. 1900 to known violations and applies only to animals destined for slaughter at the time of sale. Oppose.

S.B. 1332: Makes unlawful in California the possession, transportation, importation, exportation, propagation, purchase, sale, and offering to sell, purchase, or transfer any listed animal for hunting. Support.

WASHINGTON

S.B. 5666: Requires the use of lethal force in the state to prevent seals and sea lions from preying on salmon or steelhead. Oppose.

H.B. 1033: Prohibits the release of lighter-than-air balloons in the state. Such balloons eventually fall to Earth and endanger animals who unknowingly consume them. Support.

HAWAII

H.B. 253: Removes cockfighting from the penal code and makes it a mere infraction of the agricultural code. The WCRO was able to work with local groups to defeat the bill.

A proposed California law would define ostriches as “exotic livestock.” Sales tax would not apply to their purchase.

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 in planning a will.

Please send will 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 St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.