

## 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 These cats are victims of an outdated perception that cats cannot be happy unless allowed outdoors alone.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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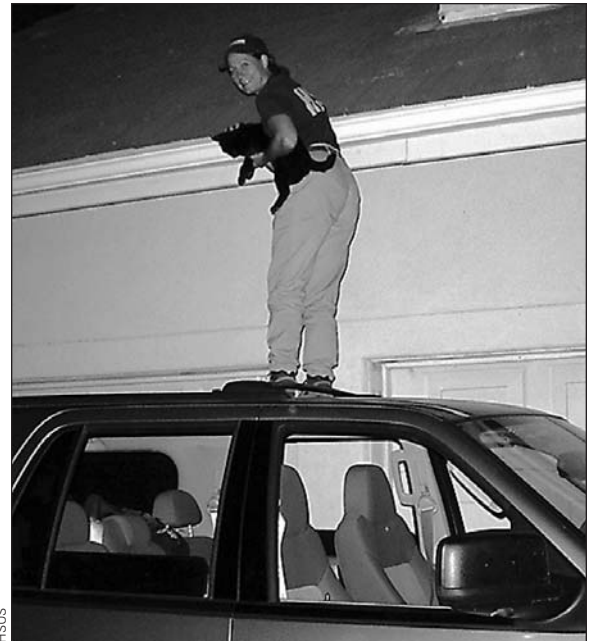
**WCRO's Bob Reder helps a local cat advocate humanely trap feral cats in Sacramento**



## 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



**WCRO's Cynthia Cutler gets innovative to rescue a cat from a rooftop during the California wildfires.**

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

*continued on page 2*



WCRO staff member John Domers (left) discussed HSUS disaster services programs with Northridge area K9 Search and Rescue team members (L-R) Becky Dennis, Susanna Guizar, and Jerry Volkenant.

## WCRO at Disaster Training Events

Each year WCRO staff members exhibit HSUS disaster preparedness materials for pets at a variety of special events and explain how HSUS's disaster services teams 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. Thousands of local residents had a chance to meet and speak with dozens of exhibitors. For more information about disaster preparedness for pets, go to [www.hsus.org/disasters](http://www.hsus.org/disasters).

*continued from "Firestorm," page 1*

reunited with their owners a few days later.

The HSUS San Bernardino team worked with SBCACC to assist in animal evacuations. SBCACC reported they received 860 calls from owners to evacuate their animals. The WCRO team alone evacuated more than 180 of them. Team members also helped staff the Norton emergency animal shelter set up at the San Bernardino County International Airport. In San Diego County, 3,500 horses and 500 companion animals were evacuated. Large animals were housed among three staging areas while small

# 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. WCRO'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 eye-witness 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 supervisors, 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.

Later in September, District Attorney Tom Sneddon 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.



WCRO's Bob Reder helped ensure the humane evaluation of hundreds of horses in a large-scale cruelty case in Buellton, California.

animals stayed at the county's three shelters.

One of the lessons this disaster reiterated is the importance of being prepared. "This was the swiftest fire we've seen in a long time," says Cutler. "A lot of people were caught off guard. It's in times like these that we realize how important our pets are to us. It is crucial to have a disaster plan for your pets as well as your family. If you have to evacuate, do not leave your pets, horses, or livestock behind." If you need to evacuate, plan ahead. Determine how long it will take to evacuate your large animals and where you will take them. Securely fasten an up-to-

date identification tag on the animal's collar, halter, or carrier and mark livestock. Be sure to pack a week's worth of food, water, and other supplies such as cat litter, medication, vaccination records, blankets, toys, and a photo of you with your pet.

With disaster preparation fresh on her mind, Cutler conducted a preparedness presentation at the Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, this past February. More than 40,000 veterinarians, vet techs, and veterinary professionals from California, Nevada, Arizona, and Canada attended the conference.

# Fixathon Sets Record

**M**ore than 300 San Diego feral cats got a fix on March 14, 2004—a 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 Boersma, spokesperson for the Coalition, the number set a world record. The event's goal was to help reduce the area's feral cat population.

WCRO's John Dommers helped document the event with digital videotaping and digital 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.*



JOHN DOMMERS/HSUS

*continued from "Feral Cats," page 1*

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, Release, and Management (TTVAR-M) method recommended by The HSUS.

"It is the management component that separates this program from the others," said WCRO's Bob Reder. "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."



HSUS

## Safe Cats at Rivercats

**W**CRO took the Safe Cats campaign out to the ballgame last August by staffing an information booth at the Sacramento Rivercats game. The campaign seeks to dispel myths about cats and encourage cat owners to keep their cats safe indoors.

Cats are America's most popular pets. Most cat owners love their pets but are unaware that their cat is safer and can be just as happy when kept safely confined. Those who are allowed outdoors unsupervised are more likely to die prematurely from diseases, poisons, attacks by other animals, abuse by humans, or vehicle accidents. WCRO's Eric Sakach and Cynthia Cutler staffed the booth, promoting the campaign and handing out literature, catnip toys, and magnets to baseball fans. Sakach presented a specially signed "Mutts" comic strip to the Rivercats in appreciation for their support of Safe Cats.

### 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.

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

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL (OPTIONAL) \_\_\_\_\_



*Promoting the protection of all animals*

### THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES.

WEST COAST REGIONAL OFFICE  
5301 Madison Avenue, Suite 202  
P.O. Box 417220 (mailing address)  
Sacramento, CA 95841-7220

# 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 Dutton (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 lunches.* A resolution by Assemblyman Joe Nations (D) of Marin, urges all state agencies to develop school lunches that include daily vegetarian options.

■ *Special vehicle license plates.* A provision for a special interest license plate that would benefit spay/neuter programs was 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 enhance 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 adoptions for shelter animals. But it came with a price tag that the state is not willing to pay. While law suits 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 stray holding period instead of five days prescribed by the Hayden Bill.



**Captive-bred parrots are afforded more protection thanks to a new California law scheduled to go into effect this fall.**

■ *Ban on declawing exotic or wild cats.* Assemblyman David Koretz (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 Koretz, California State Assembly, P.O. Box 942849, Sacramento, CA 95814-0042.

## Hawaii

■ *Felony animal cruelty.* S.B. 3137 and its companion H.B. 2791 propose to make aggravated 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.

## Nevada

■ *Mandatory counseling for juveniles.* Acknowledging the link between animal cruelty and human violence, A.B. 221, introduced by Assemblyman Bernie Anderson and signed into law May 13, 2003, provides for mandatory evaluation and counseling for juveniles committing offenses involving firearms or cruelty to animals. Not every juvenile animal abuser becomes a serial killer, but nearly every serial killer was

a juvenile animal abuser. Early intervention is a necessary step in the attempt to alter a life of violent behavior.

■ *Animal cruelty laws strengthened.* Gov. Kenny Guinn signed legislation this past June that provides for minimum sentencing, increased penalties for repeat offenders of animal cruelty laws, protection for police and service dogs, and makes the killing of livestock, strays, and wild horses a felony. Due in part to the horse killings in Storey County, this bill garnered support from the ranching community, wild horse advocates, service animal groups, and The HSUS.

## Regulations Update

**F**or 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 10276, 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 congregated and federally-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 people; and *not* to require procedures such as declawing or removing an animal's vocal cords as conditions of pet ownership.

# La Jolla Seals Just Want to Share

**Y**ou can see them lolling away the day on the beach or frisking in the ocean.

They're the harbor seals of La Jolla, California's, seawall-protected "Children's Pool" beach. The beach offers the closest look at wild harbor seals to be found anywhere on North America's west coast. According to San Diego lifeguard records, about 80,000 people a month come to the beach to "sealwatch." Depending on the time of day, those visiting the beach can see 100 or more seals. They're a star attraction. And they've shared the beach with people since the seawall was built in 1931. But that isn't stopping some local residents, including a city councilman, who would like to see the seals permanently removed.

To protect the seals, The HSUS has joined forces with local groups and individuals in



JOHN DOMMERS/HSUS

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.

WCRO staff member John Dommers wrote to his San Diego City Councilman last year stating, in part: "As generous as people can be to build structures such as the Children's Pool, no person can purchase the environmental rights to a specialized marine environment to the exclusion of another species. I find the arguments that this area was built for human children and not for seals to be selfish and elitist in nature.

"No matter how gently or forcibly one tries to dissuade the seals from the Children's Pool beach, it will constitute harassment. I urge the city council to capitalize on the outstanding education and recreation opportunity the harbor seals provide to the hundreds of thousands of visitors who enjoy viewing them each year.

"The children of La Jolla have a wide



JOHN DOMMERS/HSUS

***A child sealwatches at La Jolla's Children's Pool beach. If some get their way, the seals—and the joy they bring to thousands—will be removed.***

selection of beaches in La Jolla and San Diego. The seals have a very limited selection of resting places, especially where they can be easily viewed and appreciated by hundreds each day. Please abandon any plan to eliminate the seals from their natural environment and allow them to continue using the beach area undisturbed."

Concerned individuals are urged to contact the San Diego City Council and ask them not to eliminate the seal resting area at the Children's Pool. You can contact Councilman Scott Peters at 202 C. St, MS#10A, San Diego, CA 92101; or [ScottPeters@sandiego.gov](mailto:ScottPeters@sandiego.gov).

## Regional Wrap-up

### WCRO Assists in Goat and Cat Rescues

**A**t the request of El Dorado County Animal Control, WCRO Program Coordinator Cynthia Cutler (below in photo) assisted in the rescue of 70 goats



HSUS

who 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, WCRO Regional Coordinator Bob Reder assisted with the execution of a search warrant at a residence where 60 cats—many of whom required veterinary care—were housed in unsanitary conditions. Authorities seized 18 cats, and charges are pending against the owner.

### WCRO Director Sakach Recognized for Animal Protection Work

WCRO Director Eric Sakach was a recipient of a Humane-itarian Award presented by the

Sacramento Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals during its second annual Humane-itarian Awards dinner celebration February 5 in Sacramento. Sakach was recognized for his work in animal protection over the past 28 years.

### Voice Against Violence

WCRO's Bob Reder participated in the annual Voice Against Violence day at the Sacramento City College. In addition to HSUS presentations, the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office, National Organization for Women, Women Escaping a Violent Environment, the Sacramento City Police Department, and the Association of Student Government also gave talks. Reder noted the link between animal abuse and human violence and emphasized the need for intervention and counseling.

# 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

**F**ifty 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

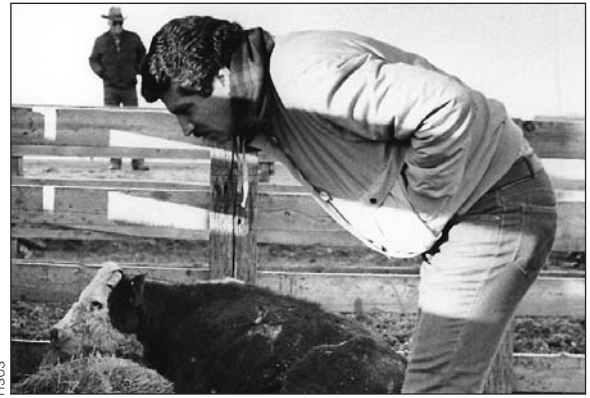
cases in which we've been involved. While much of our work has been reported in the pages of our various publications and the regional newsletters, there's a good chance you've also read or heard something about the animal protection efforts of The HSUS in the media.

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](http://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.



*Then an HSUS investigator, Eric Sakach inspects the conditions of neglected cows in 1984.*

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 creating a truly humane society.

## Contacting HSUS

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**Promoting the protection of all animals**

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