

Make Every Week Be Kind To Animals Week, May 5-11

EXOTIC ANIMALS: BORN FREE, SOLD OUT

-Janet Walker

If you have ever been tempted to adopt a wild or "exotic" animal, you should know that traditionally undomesticated animals, thought they may be very cute and cuddly when very young, rarely lead happy and healthy lives in captivity, and often grow up to be unmanageable.

Many wild animals are protected by federal and state laws that make it illegal for private individuals to keep them. These laws are designed to protect people as well as the animals. Raccoons, foxes, bobcats, wolves, and other creatures that one might wish to adopt have innate characteristics that make them unsuitable - and even dangerous - to keep in one's home.

Conflicts arise when previously "manageable" animals reach full size and sexual maturity, fail to become housebroken, or display protective or aggressive behaviors compounded by the frustrations of captivity or small enclosures. People who try to keep formerly wild animals cannot always understand their needs and behaviors. As a result, the animals can receive inappropriate dietary or veterinary care that harms them for life.

The trade in exotic animals -- undomesticated animals from outside the United States -- greatly threatens their survival in their native habitats, and is extremely cruel to the captured individuals. For every parrot, cockatoo, or other bird captured in the wild and imported [live] to the United States, approximately four others will die. Captured birds are crammed into tubes, tiny boxes, cages, and makeshift enclosures where they suffer from heat, thirst, hunger, and disease. Those animals who do survive barbaric capture methods and crude (often illegal) transport to the United States face lives of loneliness, boredom, and frustration, which can make them destructive. Birds captured as adults are particularly prone to these problems. Captive birds are denied the social contacts of living in large flocks, and suffer from solitary confinement and the stresses of not being allowed to fly.

What often happens to these "exotic" animals after they become too much of a nuisance in the house? Too often people "release" them into the country, thinking they can naturally fend for themselves. At this point they are usually either (1) shot by a local farmer, (2) killed by a coyote or by other large dogs similarly "set free" in the country, or (3) they establish a wild population which wreaks havoc with the local native wildlife population in the area. When [wildlife rehabilitators] receive phone calls from people desperate to do the right thing for their "exotic" friend they can no longer live with - and we get a frightening number of these calls (pot-bellied pigs, foxes, bobcats, [raccoons, crocodiles, squirrels].....) - we have no alternative but to recommend euthanasia for the animal. As difficult a decision as that is, there simply is no "good" alternative for this pitiful situation that never should have been.

CUB NEEDS HELP TO SPARE BEARS

Now is the time for Michigan to end the unsportsmanlike practices of shooting bears at bait piles and using dogs to hunt them. A 1993 poll showed that 65% of residents oppose the use of dogs and 61% oppose the use of bait in the hunting of black bears, but unless people speak up, hunting interests will get their way and the state's bears will be in for a bloodbath. While there is little scientific evidence on this subject, spokespersons for Citizens United for Bears stated at a recent WMFA meeting that the use of dogs increased the kill rate by about 28%. Hunters can drive around until they find a fresh bear trail, turn the dogs loose with radio tracking devices, then wait until the dogs tree a bear for them to shoot. In order to ban these unethical practices, CUB needs 250,000 registered voters to sign petitions and put a proposal on the ballot. It can be done, if people come forward to help.

There have been people out getting signatures, generally at any public place. WMFA is seeking volunteers so that we can approach local pet supply stores and get permission to set up petition tables. With warmer weather, we will be able to find people at outdoor events and it is not hard to get a lot of signatures since this is not against hunting, but against two unsportsmanlike practices that a lot of hunters oppose. Also, allowing the baiting of bears acclimates them to humans. This will result in a lot more bears being deemed a "nuisance." Those bears will have to be destroyed because they are hanging around people's cabins and homes waiting for a free meal. If we are going to manage the bear population for all of the citizens in the State, then those outside the MUCC/NRA lock step need to call in to help.

You can call WMFA to help or to get a petition to circulate on your own (if you're a registered voter and you only have registered voters from the same county sign your petition). You can also contact CUB at 4990 Northwind Drive, Ste. 215, East Lansing, MI 48823, or 517-337-3040 or 800-887-4200. We need to get as many signatures as possible by the end of April. Every signature counts!



DOLPHINS IN JEOPARDY

Leave it to the selfish and Neanderthal thinking in Congress to want to weaken current protection that spares thousands of dolphins from death because of tuna fishing. Bills in the Senate (S1420) and House (HR 2823) would revise our "dolphin safe" law "to allow chasing dolphins to exhaustion and netting of dolphins." (ASPCA Animal Watch, Spring 1996). You can fight for the dolphins by calling our Senators and Congressman and tell them to leave the laws as is which will help American fisherman and dolphins and punish unfair foreign fishing fleets.

ANIMAL LOBBYIST AT WMFA DINNER

Lobbyist Eileen Liska, founder of HEAL-PAC, (Humanitarians for Environmental and Animal Laws Political Action Committee, Lansing, MI), recently addressed local activists after dinner at Gaia and urged us to be a part of Lobby Day '96, May 15th in Lansing. After our wonderful veggie/vegan dinner, Eileen brought us up to date concerning animals and legislation, the recent victory in preventing mourning dove hunting, and the failed attempt to require that animals from shelters be spayed or neutered.

Eileen explained how, despite strong public and legislative support, Governor Engler vetoed House Bill 4654, which was trying to decrease the number of unwanted and stray pets in public and private animal shelters through the required sterilization of all pets adopted out. While the Governor claimed that the Bill's requirement would violate the Headlee Amendment, the Bill's sponsor and Michigan Humane Society had already researched this issue and concluded there would be no violation, as the operation of animal control shelters is an optional, not mandated service. While Ms. Liska called for activists to write Governor Engler [State Capitol, Lansing, MI 48909 or call (517)-373-3400] to ask him to change his position and allow a revised bill to be passed and signed in to effect.

This and Senate Bill 578, which would prohibit dog racing in Michigan, will be priorities for animal advocates this spring. Other priorities are to ban the owning of dangerous exotic pets which suffer in poor confinement and often injure or kill people (ie. the lion in Allegan County last year), and the creation of a vanity license plate to help fund shelter programs to reduce stray and unwanted pets.

LOBBY DAY - MAY 15

The above article is why Ms Liska (Legislative Advocate for the Michigan Humane Society) has urged our area to send as many people to Lobby Day '96 as possible. You can help advance the MHS's long-term legislative goals for animals by supporting this and the important work of HEAL-PAC through speaking for animals to our legislators or their staff. By attending the second annual Lobby Day, you will be part of the democratic process and give needed support to stalled legislation that we need to have passed. The fact that voters will be informed about issues and spend time with their politicians in an election year will give a needed boost to make the proposed laws a reality. Our elected officials will try to do what the people want this year, so we need to show that most want laws that will make things better for animals and people alike. For more information you can call HEAL-PAC at 810-887-2184.

WMFA will join scores of area citizens for a day in Lansing to exercise our constitutional right to affect change through the democratic process. We most likely will have a car pool set for that Wednesday, so please call and indicate your interest or just

make a donation to help with the expense of sending someone in your place. Animal lovers are also encouraged to write or call their local legislators, and more importantly, speak up about these issues if your state rep or senator is in the area meeting with constituents (people like us).

You are encouraged to register for Lobby Day by May 10th, so they will have materials ready for you and a lunch available. The cost is \$35 in advance (\$40 at the door/no lunch guarantee). Mail your check or money order to HEAL-PAC at P.O. Box 14291, Lansing, MI 48909 and then contact friends or WMFA about car pooling if you want to save some gas.

The Second Annual Lobby Day Schedule for Wednesday, May 15th is as follows:

- 7:15 Leave Grand Rapids for Lansing
- 8:30 Registration
- 9:00 Introduction
- 9:15 Federal Animal Protection Legislation
- 10:30 State Animal Protection Legislation
- 12:00 Luncheon with special guest speaker: Dr. Andrew Rowan, Director of the Center for Animals and Public Policy, Tufts University, and awards to supportive State Legislators
- 2:00 David Dempsey, Policy Director for the Michigan Environmental Council: State & Federal Environmental Legislation
- 2:30 Lobby Day Wrap-up, Question and Answer Session
- 3:00 Visit your State Senator or Legislator
- 6:00 Arrive back in Grand Rapids

RODEO INVESTIGATION BUCKAROOS WANTED

It will soon be time for summer rodeos, probably Grattan's Circle R, Sparta's Klein, and who knows how many traveling ones. Help will be needed to investigate these cruel traveling shows. People who have camera or note-taking abilities are needed to look for shock-prodding in the chute, use of tight flank straps and ropes, dangerous surroundings or potential injury activities, lack of shelter, and other problems that are against Kent County Regulations.

Also needed are voices for animals that suffer during these events just for some people's "entertainment" or financial gain. Every rodeo has sponsors - businesses that depend on customers, like you. If customers are informed of the cruelty that goes on at rodeos and how the animals suffer while being transported from rodeo to rodeo, they are likely to be sympathetic and complain to businesses that give money to support the rodeo. This was very effective when fighting the Wyoming rodeo. All it takes is a few phone calls and letters to make a business think twice about supporting rodeo.

Please help by joining WMFA in contacting sponsors, picketing, or investigating behind the scenes.

VEAL IS SICK! TORTURE FOR THE CALF/TOXIC FOR YOU

Join WMFA and groups nationwide on May 12, Mother's Day, in protesting the cruelty involved in manufacturing veal. Calves are taken after birth and fed a protein deficient diet while held in a cage (22" X 54") that prevents them from moving around and developing any muscle tone. Conditions are so bad that antibiotics are fed to the victims to keep them alive while they are fattened up for market. Humane Farming Association was recently on a

news show with evidence of the antibiotic problem that is routine to the factory farm veal industry. Antibiotics that are over-used in animals can create a resistant strain of a disease like salmonella, which can then be untreatable if a person eats contaminated meat. This has been a documented killer.

Volunteers are needed for our Saturday and/or Sunday visibility event. You can also help by asking restaurants if they serve veal, and if it comes from a factory farm. They will most likely be able to tell you. Then you can educate them about the cruelty and suggest they switch suppliers or drop veal from the menu as it promotes suffering and is a health threat.

Join us in the fight to help animals and the environment. **WEST MICHIGAN FOR ANIMALS** 459-1982

Volunteer and help with
**EDUCATION VISIBILITY
FUNDRAISING PROGRAMS
NEWSLETTER CALLING
FLYERS ORGANIZING**

*A little time spent to educate people
can save many animals from pain and suffering.*

ARBOR DAY, APRIL 26

Trees are very important to the environment and offer homes to animals, shade to people, and help purify the air. If you join the National Arbor Day Foundation with a \$10 membership, they will send you 10 free trees (Colorado Blue Spruce or other conifers selected to grow in your area). Send your name, address, city, state, and zip code with your membership fee to: National Arbor Day Foundation, 211 N. 12th St., Lincoln NE, 28508.

VOICES FOR THE VOICELESS: WORLD ANIMAL AWARENESS WEEK, JUNE 18-24

National Alliance for Animals is coordinating a week of animal activism in Washington, D.C. This will be the second time people have gathered for animal welfare/animal rights. Once again there will be an animal rights convention, an exhibition of animal-related items, and education tables presented by advocacy groups and compassionate vendors. On June 23, there will be a march through the streets. Wrapping things up is Lobby Day on Capitol Hill, where citizens can ask their Federal Representative or Senator to support needed legislation for animals and the environment. If you register before May 15, the cost is \$85.00. The schedule is as follows:

- June 20 - 22: The World Congress For Animals: Animal Rights convention featuring leaders from around the globe
- June 21 - 23: World Expo For Animals Exhibits from animal advocacy groups and compassionate corporations
- June 22: Celebrity Gala
- June 23: March For The Animals March for animal rights & gather to listen to national & grassroots animal advocates
- June 24: National Lobby Day For Animals Activists will carry the message to Capitol Hill and meet with Congress persons or their staff to educate our elected officials.

Several groups want to charter a bus to go to Washington for the weekend. Contact the Kent County Humane Society for more information. West Michigan for Animals members would like to go for Congress and the March. They may car pool and either share a room in the suburbs or tent in a campground with showers, pool, etc. If you would like to join the car pool, contact Alexandra at 459-1982, leave a message including your telephone number.

The boycott that had been called, to protest the structure of this event and the fact that money would be spent outside the grassroots level, has been rescinded.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

IF YOU FIND A BABY WILD ANIMAL, or an injured wild animal, call West Michigan Wildlife Rescue (698-9741). DO NOT FEED IT! Keep it warm and in a dark, quiet place, away from children and pets, until it can be transported to a wildlife rehabilitator. West Michigan Wildlife Rescue is a nonprofit organization which will either accept the animal, or refer you to a more appropriate facility.



PLEASE, SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR COMPANION ANIMAL

For information about possible help with the cost of this procedure, call 1-800-248-SPAY. You will be referred to the nearest participating veterinarian. If you would like to help this program, please contact us.

GREYHOUND COMPANIONS, "providing a new leash on life," promotes the adoption of greyhounds that are retired from racing and face destruction as surplus equipment. If you would like to adopt a well-behaved, affectionate, clean, short-haired, quiet dog, then a greyhound may be for you. Please contact Pam Rumbergs at 776-0306. There are fees associated with these adoptions.

K-9 KOMPANIONS has dogs that need good homes. K-9 Kompanions is offering 1/2 off the cost to spay/neuter dogs that go to responsible homes. Call Cyndee at 363-0209 for more information.

IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING THE PURCHASE OF A COMPANION ANIMAL, please check first with Greyhound Companions, K-9 Kompanions, the Kent County Humane Society (453-7757, 1890 Bristol NW) or the Kent County Animal Shelter (336-3209, 711 Ball NE).

IF YOU MUST GIVE UP AN ANIMAL, please do not offer it to strangers or "free to a good home" unless the animal is sterilized and you have properly screened the new owner as to why he wants to adopt, the home conditions, other pets, yard size and condition, children, and the owner's capability to properly take care of the animal. It is always best to ask for some monetary compensation in order to discourage bunchers (people who "adopt" pets, then turn around and sell them to laboratories).