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November 8, 2005

Dear friend,

Thank you for your comments concerning The HSUS's activities in the Gulf Coast states during and after Hurricane Katrina. We remain highly engaged with response to Katrina's aftermath. The generosity of hundreds of thousands of Americans has made it possible for The HSUS to respond in a comprehensive way to this unprecedented disaster. We spent millions of dollars on rescue, relief, rehabilitation during the emergency phase of our operations, and we continue to provide substantial support for reunification initiatives, rescue efforts, and reconstruction work in the afflicted zones. We are working closely with other organizations to assess the need for additional response measures in the Gulf region, and we may undertake additional operations if we decide that our participation is necessary.

Apart from our ongoing work in Louisiana, supporting the Louisiana SPCA and other responders, we remain highly active in the field of disaster response at this time. We are sheltering almost 500 animals in place in Arkansas, several hundred of them refugees from Katrina. In addition, we have people on the ground in Florida and in Mexico dealing with the effects of Hurricane Wilma. Seeking to extend our disaster relief work in another urgent crisis, we also recently sent staff members to Pakistan to help after the earthquake hit.

On top of all this, we continue to advance the normal work of The HSUS, fighting factory farming, combating puppy mills, taking a stand against fur, and much more. On November 8, we announced a win in our campaign against Trader Joe's, after the company agreed to move its entire private line to cage-free eggs. That same day, our president and CEO Wayne Pacelle testified before the United States Congress on legislation to curb puppy mill abuses. And during the first week of November, we prevailed in our fight to see a provision included in a congressional appropriations bill to stop the slaughter of horses for human consumption.

The HSUS ended its operations at Gonzales, Louisiana at the request of the state veterinarian, in part because it was our strong conviction that local authority for animal care and control in the New Orleans parish, in the form of the Louisiana SPCA, had to be restored as soon as possible. For that reason also, The HSUS has invested substantial funds, staff time, and other resources helping the LA SPCA to restore its operations in New Orleans.

Promoting the protection of all animals

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A functional LA SPCA is essential to the work of animal protection in Louisiana. In addition to the rescue, relief, and sheltering work we supported in the weeks after Katrina struck, we believe that our support of the LA SPCA is a worthwhile use of funds contributed to The HSUS. With our help, the LA SPCA is expanding its staff, outfitting its new headquarters, and responding to animals in need in their parish.

Even as we ended our Gonzales operation, however, we continued to support rescue visits to the addresses provided to us by concerned citizens. We exhausted the list of addresses we received, although, after two months, there is little prospect that there are any live animals trapped in homes. For that reason, we also supported the shift to the trapping and feeding of stray animals in the city, an effort that continues.

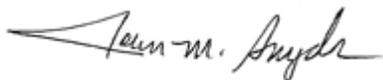
There are admittedly many animals, strays and former pets, on the streets of New Orleans at this time. There is not one of us at The HSUS who would not wish to see every lost or displaced animal reunited or re-homed with a loving person. That is why our staff members at HSUS headquarters and elsewhere are working long hours every day trying to expedite and to finance such reunions in the case of animals already in shelters around the country.

At some point, however, the challenge in New Orleans will become more typical of traditional animal control work, and it is the LA SPCA that has the authority and responsibility for handling the situation. For that reason, we will continue to provide support to the LA SPCA during the months ahead. In those instances when officials there make the decision to euthanize animals, The HSUS will support their decision.

The HSUS has long stood behind the principle that shelters should strive to place animals that enter their facilities as responsibly as possible. However, even with all efforts there will still be animals that according to some definition are adoptable, but must be euthanized because more are coming in the front door.

The hurricane will lead to some positive outcomes for the animals of New Orleans and other Louisiana communities. Far more attention will be paid to the problems of heartworm, low rate of spay/neuter surgeries in the region, and other issues. We are going to do all that we can to ensure that the citizens of the state become more engaged with the work of the LA SPCA. The community must come together and properly fund local and regional animal care and control, provide targeted high-volume spay and neuter programs, pass laws that hold pet owners responsible for proper pet care and make programs available to encourage them to address behavior problems early, before they “divorce” themselves from their animals. This is the pathway to ending animal overpopulation in Louisiana as in every state.

Sincerely,



John M. Snyder, Senior Director
Companion Animal Issues
The HSUS

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