



THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 44th YEAR

FALL 1990

Thanks to the work of our talented and dedicated staff of professionals and volunteers and strong community support, the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is able to report that adoptions of homeless animals through the local Shelter have been dramatically increased over the past year. Good news, certainly; but these numbers are only a beginning. For each homeless animal the Shelter is able to place with a new family, others just as deserving of a better life await adoption.

The keys to successful placement of more of the gentle creatures in our charge are community education and involvement. The Shelter is seeking individuals who are willing to commit a little time each week in service of homeless animals. We always need volunteers to walk dogs and help feed and groom the animals at the Shelter. But we also need someone with marketing experience to help us develop more advertising to support an expanded newsletter or create new opportunities for community involvement; artists to design logos for SPOTLIGHT columns and special events during the year; and writers to contribute articles for our newsletters. Can you help? For more information, call 838-4775.

Finally, a way everyone can support the League and help our animals: With Christmas around the corner, plan to purchase your gifts from the League. Stop by the Shelter and choose from t-shirts, sweatshirts, identification tags, leashes, collars and cat carriers. Our next issue of SPOTLIGHT will feature the items that will make a perfect gift for the animal lover (or animal!) in your life.

League Slates Annual Dinner Oct. 25

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria will hold its annual dinner and general membership meeting on Thursday evening, October 25, 1990. The dinner will be held at the American Legion Banquet Hall in the historic Gadsby's Tavern building, 400 Cameron Street, in Old Town Alexandria.

The evening's activities will begin with cocktails (cash bar) at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 7:30 p.m. A vegetarian option will be available. After dinner, there will be a very short business meeting, including the election of the Board of Directors for the coming year.

A special event for the evening will be a brief presentation by Mr. Pat Halpin of the architectural firm of Wisniewski Blair and Associates. Mr. Halpin is the project manager for the new Alexandria Animal Shelter which is currently under design. He will have sketches of the proposed new Shelter and will discuss the design features of the building. Construction will begin in August 1991.

The principal speaker for the evening will be Richard Hawe, DVM. A 1975 graduate of the Veterinary College of the University of Georgia, Dr. Hawe since 1979 has been a co-owner and co-director of the Alexandria Animal Hospital, an accredited member of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). He is a member of the AWLA Board, a Diplomate of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, and is active on several AAHA committees, including a Screening Committee which reviews grant proposals and funds research in veterinary medicine.

Dr. Hawe, who also is widely published in veterinary journals, will speak on "Veterinary Medicine in the 1990s."

This event is not a fund-raiser, and the \$15 cost per person merely covers the evening's expenses. For the past three



Dr. Richard Hawe, shown here with a patient, will address the League's 1990 annual dinner meeting.

years, our annual dinner has been sold out, so early reservations are encouraged.

For additional information, or to make reservations, please call Mrs. Vivian Willis, 549-8962.

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Household Poisons

by Susan M. Barnes, DVM



Dr. Susan Barnes is a full time clinician and director at the Virginia-Maryland Veterinary Emergency Service in Alexandria. She lives nearby, with Hondo, her big yellow Labrador.

Pet owners should be aware that their pets can be poisoned by a number of pesticides, drugs, and chemicals—both natural and manmade—commonly found in and around our homes and work places. It is important to know how to act quickly and efficiently when a pet is exposed to them.

Small domestic animals like dogs, cats, birds, ferrets, and reptiles, as well as the "pocket pets" such as hamsters—commonly explore our homes, yards, and storage areas. They are often exposed through ingestion, direct contact, or inhalation to a number of harmful substances, including pesticides, human drugs, cleaning products, and heavy metals like zinc, lead, and mercury.

The use of pesticides has done a great deal to limit human disease carriers and animal suffering, but it is essential to use them wisely. Despite progress in creating safer products for use on or around small animals, products which today have safer counterparts are still being marketed although they are known to have killed innumerable dogs and cats. Sadly, manufacturers persist in marketing rodent poisons and insecticides that are potentially lethal to domestic animals.

For example, the active ingredients in Hartz Blockade, which is produced for dogs and cats and has caused death in both species, may affect cats most often, possibly because the directions are not clear or because they are improperly followed.

In cats, the most common signs associated with toxicosis are hypersalivation, tremors, incoordination, vomiting, depression, hyperactivity, seizures, and lack of

appetite. Other effects include hypothermia, dilated pupils, vocalization, altered behavior, disorientation, difficulty breathing, and even death.

Dogs often consume human medications, foods, or other products in toxic amounts when owners fail to safeguard them properly. Chocolate, for instance, contains compounds which, if ingested in sufficient quantities, can cause vomiting, hyperactivity, irregular heartbeat, seizures, coma, and even death. Chocolate should not be fed to dogs!

Cats, too, can be exposed by humans to toxic substances. For example, a well-meaning owner may deliberately administer a single dose of Tylenol to a kitten who seems ill. This can result in breathing difficulty, vomiting, and swelling, especially of the face and paws. In dogs, vomiting and depression are the most common effects, and liver damage may result.

Possible pet intoxication should be considered a true emergency even when



symptoms are not immediately evident. Different animals react differently to the same intoxicant, so appropriate treatment may vary depending on the animal. Prevention and appropriate, swift action once exposure is suspected is critical.

If you think your pet has been poisoned, phone your veterinarian immediately. He or she will need to know:

1. the type of pet and his/her approximate weight;
2. what toxicant or compound you think your pet was exposed to and how (swallowed, in eye, on skin, etc.);
3. how long ago the exposure occurred;
4. how much was ingested; and



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5. whether the pet is exhibiting symptoms, such as salivation, lethargy, etc.

Pet owners should have readily available at home the following:

1. 3% hydrogen peroxide, to induce vomiting if indicated.

2. mild soap solutions, such as Ivory dish soap, to wash certain compounds from the pet's skin.

3. normal saline, to wash or flush the eyes. Artificial Tears is safe to use for any eye injury.

4. K-Y lubricant, for protruding or popped-out eyes. *NOTE:* Any eye injury is an emergency and should be seen by a vet right away.

5. antihistamines, such as Benadryl (25 mg capsules or pediatric elixir) or Chlor-Trimeton (4 mg tablets), for allergic reactions or insect stings

Remember: These compounds are to be used *only* as directed by a veterinarian.

After any immediate home care, your vet may recommend that your pet be hospitalized for treatment and observation. In such cases, it is better to be safe than sorry. So inquire as to possible future consequences of such exposure and follow the veterinarian's advice to prevent further problems.

League's Computer Bytes the Dust

The League's only computer and printer, both aging models, are now on the brink of extinction. Though we have treated the system with tender loving care over the years, its days are clearly numbered. As a result, we are in desperate need of an IBM-compatible computer (with a hard drive) and printer, preferably a laser model.

If you would like to donate these items to the Shelter, the staff would be very grateful.

The League is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization; a receipt will be given for your donation.

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Jack Steele, *President*
Joyce McDowell, *Editor*

Shelter Serves Many Kinds of Animals

Dogs and cats are not the only pets adopted from the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. Meet "Berry," a blue-fronted Amazon parrot.

Berry was adopted by the O'Donovan family in Alexandria and has free run of their kitchen counter, where he can be the center of the family's activity and attention. Berry's arrival has prompted some urgent rearrangements in the kitchen—from barricading the telephone behind a canister set after Berry chewed through two telephone cords to hiding the toothbrush and toothpaste after Berry punctured a tube of Crest and adopted the toothbrush as his favorite toy.

The O'Donovan family is well accustomed to making special arrangements for feathered friends. Connie O'Donovan is a state-licensed wildlife rehabilitator who specializes in hatchling songbirds. Throughout spring and summer the O'Donovans' dining room is often filled with bird cages housing baby birds of all sizes and descriptions. Connie feeds these little ones around the clock until they are old enough to be released into the wild. Now that the baby bird season is over for another year, Connie is raising several baby squirrels. Berry often sits on her shoulder, she reports, to supervise the babies' bottle feedings.

"Berry is full of personality," says Connie. "He talks a blue streak when he is in the mood," and does a special dance on top of his cage to greet her husband's arrival home every night. Putting away the kitchen utensils is a special adventure since Berry joined the family, as he helps himself to his choice of "toys." Berry's current selections include a tea-strainer, a cookie cutter and, of course, his favorite toothbrush.

"He's much more entertaining than television," says Connie of the O'Donovans' family parrot.



Berry gnaws happily away at his favorite toy, a toothbrush.

Animal Abuse

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The League urges anyone who suspects an animal is being mistreated to call right away. Every call is kept confidential, and our animal control personnel are trained to investigate and take the appropriate action to help the animal.

There are laws requiring that animals be properly and humanely cared for. Many complaints can be handled through education, while others may require legal action.

The key to helping an animal in trouble is to report it, as soon as you become aware of the problem. Any delay may cause the animal additional suffering and may even result in irreversible physical or psychological damage.

Remember: Feeling sorry for an animal is a waste of time; calling us isn't. Your compassion and caring really can mean a better life for an abused or neglected animal.

Shelter Focus

Linda Johnson, Kennel Manager



Linda Johnson began working with our Shelter in September 1989 as an Animal Caretaker. Her prior animal experience included working as a volunteer with a shelter in Florida, where she gained an extensive knowledge of exotic birds.

Since Linda's employment history has been in management, she was destined to be promoted quickly to the position of Kennel Manager at the Alexandria Shelter. Linda has implemented many new procedures to improve the excellent care our animals receive.

Our animals thrive thanks to Linda's expertise, skill and compassion, but the entire staff also benefits from her leadership and educational skills. Linda's hard work is clearly paying off, as is evident by our ever-increasing adoption rate.

YES! I care about animals and I want to support the League in its work.

Enclosed is my check for my 1990 membership dues.

\$15 Individual \$25 Family Special gift \$ _____

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The League is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization established in 1946.

Please return your contribution to:
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Beginning with this issue, SPOTLIGHT ON ANIMALS will feature regular profiles of Shelter staff and volunteers.

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Abuse for Profit: A National Outrage

Of all the domestic animal issues that have received media attention—ranging from responsible pet ownership to pet overpopulation—perhaps none is more deserving of mass public condemnation and outrage than that of puppy mills.

Puppy mills? The name sounds innocuous enough. Yet, such facilities are breeding grounds for ill-kept, malnourished, diseased, and mistreated animals. One humane group refers to them as “canine concentration camps”—an apt description.

Today there are 5,000 licensed and unlicensed puppy mill breeding facilities in the United States. Most are located in six Midwestern states—Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebrasks, and Oklahoma, with Kansas and Missouri having the largest concentration. Puppies from these breeding sites primarily end up in pet stores throughout Canada and the United States—even in pet stores in Northern Virginia. One of the largest suppliers is Docktor Pet Stores, which has 250 franchises nationwide.

The likelihood of obtaining sick puppies from pet stores is high. According to Bob Baker, Field Investigator for the Humane Society of the United States, one study by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta revealed that 52 percent of pet store puppies tested for parasites were infected. Even puppies that appear healthy in pet stores can be deceiving. Certain viruses and diseases have long incubation periods—with evidence of illness not becoming evident until long after the puppy has been purchased.

Under regulations established by the Animal Welfare Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is charged with protecting dogs in breeding facilities. USDA inspectors have been soundly criticized, however, for not vigorously enforcing federal regulations, and, sadly,

dogs continue to live under horrible conditions—with inadequate water, food, or essential medications, and unprotected in overcrowded cages from the burning sun or the freezing cold.

If you still are interested in a purebred, however, there is plenty you can do to ensure that the puppy you purchase is healthy.

1. *The League recommends that people not buy animals from pet stores.* Doing so will only contribute to the puppy mill industry and all the abuses associated with it. Instead, visit the Animal Shelter in Alexandria. We have many beautiful, healthy animals, even purebreds, waiting to be adopted into good homes.

Our trained staff is prepared to personally assist you in selecting the right pet for your home; we also offer a low-cost spay/neuter program, home inspections that allow you to discuss pet care and responsibility with our adoption officers; license and ID tags; and a wealth of educational brochures and materials.

2. *Visit a local breeder.* Look at the conditions under which the breeder's dogs live: Is there adequate heat and ventilation? Room for exercise? How many dogs are being housed? Are they socialized? Ask about veterinarian care and treatment. Refuse to buy a dog if the breeder brings the animal to your home or to a showroom without allowing you to inspect the facility.

3. *Boycott the purchase of puppies from puppy-mill states.*

4. *Urge your federal representatives and USDA Secretary Clayton Yeutter to provide better enforcement and policing of puppy-mill breeding facilities.*

The decision to bring a new animal into your home, coupled with where to purchase it, can be very difficult. The staff at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria can help you. Call us at 838-4775.

Animal Abuse: What You Can Do

Animal neglect and abuse is one of the most prevalent and horrendous crimes facing our society today. Much like child abuse, it is a crime that takes on many forms and is so unthinkable that many people close their eyes to its reality.

But looking away from the plight of an animal in distress is as bad as abusing one yourself: Animals, like children, cannot call for help themselves. Their only chance for a better life is a concerned person's call to the proper authorities who can act to help them.

Nearly everyone would intervene if he or she witnessed an animal being beaten, but there is another type of abuse that can be even more devastating to the animal. Literally millions of animals endure prolonged suffering caused by neglect.

Many companion pets are kept outside without adequate shelter, often at the end of a short chain, left to suffer blazing heat and to shiver alone through long winter nights. These animals know the physical pain of biting insects and the emotional pain of loneliness.

Other animals spend their lives isolated in basements, garages, or tiny cages, frequently in filth, with little water and food—forgotten while hearing the closeness of their families through the walls.

And all too often, these pets suffer debilitating illnesses or painful injuries, and are left in misery by owners who refuse to seek help for them.

Many times, people will notice an animal in trouble, but will hesitate to call, for fear of retaliation, because they aren't sure there really is a problem, or they mistakenly believe that nothing can be done.

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