

AWI Quarterly

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SPOTLIGHT

USDA Takes Infamous Chinchilla Dealer to Court

An administrative hearing is underway with respect to allegations of Animal Welfare Act (AWA) violations leveled by the US Department of Agriculture against Moulton Chinchilla Ranch (MCR), a supplier of chinchillas for experimentation. (See *AWI Quarterly*, fall 2020.) The USDA complaint alleges, among other things, that respondent—MCR owner, Daniel Moulton—willfully violated the AWA, failed to provide USDA inspectors access to his facilities, failed to provide adequate veterinary care to the animals, and failed to comply with minimum standards for humane handling, care, treatment, housing, and transportation of animals. The grave nature of the allegations has prompted online articles by both *Science* and *National Geographic*, based in part on information supplied by AWI.

Although such hearings are normally in person and open to the public, Moulton sought to prevent public access to this phone-in hearing. The judge did grant access—but attached conditions that AWI believes impinge on our First Amendment right to observe and disseminate information about the proceedings. AWI did not accept the conditions and is therefore excluded from the hearing while we continue to seek unfettered access.

The USDA's own attorneys have strongly objected to the unconstitutional conditions, stating: *"In order to provide a fair hearing for both USDA and Respondent, it is important that the public be granted unlimited access to the hearing. ... The conditions of the Respondent's facility, the way the Respondent treats his chinchillas, and the Respondent's inability to comply with the AWA, Regulations, and Standards should be for all to see and hear. If the Respondent is afraid of the facts, then he should not have violated the AWA and its Regulations and Standards, as alleged."*

The case is expected to continue through September. As we obtain it, information on MCR—including USDA inspection reports and photographs, court filings, *AWI Quarterly* articles, and media coverage—will be posted on our website at awionline.org/MCR. 🐾

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**Animal Welfare
Institute**

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**ABOUT THE COVER**

AWI seeks to improve the lives of animals everywhere, including animals raised for food. We promote farming systems that allow animals to live outdoors and engage in natural behaviors, and we fight against inhumane methods of slaughter. “Custom-exempt” slaughter—conducted at small plants catering mostly to hunters and individuals processing meat for their personal use—is expected to comply with the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. However, facilities designated as custom-exempt are subject to minimal oversight, and an AWI investigation found that animals at these plants are routinely subject to serious abuse. For more on our findings, see page 14. Photograph by Matthias Kruck/EyeEm.

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HOPE DIMS AS MEXICO, WHC FAIL TO HELP VAQUITA

The 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) was held virtually July 16–31. One issue before the committee was Mexico's efforts—or lack thereof—to stave off extinction of the vaquita, a porpoise species with only 10 individuals remaining, all within Mexico's Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California World Heritage site. Vaquita are considered among the site's key "Outstanding Universal Values"—elements that render a location suitable for designation as a World Heritage site.

Both the World Heritage Centre (the body that oversees the World Heritage Convention—a global agreement to protect World Heritage sites) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (the WHC's advisory body on natural heritage, abbreviated as "IUCN") acknowledge that "illegal fishing has continued in the Upper Gulf of California resulting in a threat of imminent extinction of the vaquita population" and that Mexico "has not fully implemented the regulations [adopted in September 2020] and has failed to enforce them."

At the WHC session, however, the 21 country members declined to demand that Mexico expedite corrective measures to save the vaquita. Instead, members accepted, without debate, a woefully inadequate decision that allows Mexico to postpone submitting the measures until February 1, 2022. Considering that the Centre, the IUCN, and Mexico had 24 months to complete these corrective measures since the site was designated as "in danger," the WHC's failure to act is unconscionable.

Only days before the WHC meeting, Mexico published new fishing

regulations that significantly weaken standards in the zero tolerance area (ZTA)—a region of the vaquita refuge where fishing was supposed to be prohibited. The new rules establish a complicated sliding scale whereby, for example, Mexico will only commit 100 percent of its enforcement resources if more than 50–65 illegal fishing vessels or more than 200–500 meters of gillnets are found in the ZTA in a single day. In its response to the WHC's decision, Mexico claimed that its new regulation would improve enforcement in the Upper Gulf when, in fact, it represents a significant step backwards for the species and its recovery.

FLORIDA MANATEES DYING IN RECORD NUMBERS

More Florida manatees have died this year than in any previous year since records began. The cause is primarily starvation due to loss of seagrass beds, according to state officials. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reported 841 manatee deaths between January 1 and July 2,

which already exceeds the previous record set in 2013 of 830 deaths over the course of the entire year. The culprit then was an outbreak of toxic red tide.

According to news website *TCPalm.com*, more than half of the current manatee deaths have occurred in the Indian River Lagoon and surrounding counties. The majority of deaths—37 percent—have been in Brevard County on Florida's central Atlantic coast. Biologists believe the seagrass beds are being destroyed by water pollution, leaving the manatees with no food. Boat strikes are also a cause of manatee deaths, killing at least 63 animals this year. Until 2017, manatees were classified as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, with strict protections. This designation was unwisely lowered to threatened, despite opposition from AWI and other organizations.

Elimination of sea grass beds—due to water pollution, it is believed—has led to a mass die-off of Florida's manatees. Over 800 died in the first half of 2021.



THIERRY EIDENWELL

A southern right whale carcass on the ocean floor off the coast of Argentina. Such “whale falls” represent a vital food source for scavenging organisms in the deep sea.

WORKSHOP EXAMINES CETACEANS’ OUTSIZED ROLE IN ECOSYSTEM FUNCTIONING

With support from AWI and other organizations, a joint International Whaling Commission/Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species virtual workshop was held in April 2021 on the role of cetaceans in ecosystem functioning. This was the first of two planned workshops to implement a 2016 resolution approved by the IWC to consider the contributions made by cetaceans to marine ecosystem functioning. The April workshop’s primary focus was to identify and prioritize the research needed to advance our understanding of cetacean contributions.

Nearly two dozen experts from around the world discussed the ecological value of whale falls (when whales die and their carcasses sink to the bottom of the ocean) and the role of cetaceans in carbon sequestration, nutrient circulation, ocean fertilization, and as both predators and prey. Workshop participants agreed that cetaceans play a crucial role in well-functioning marine ecosystems, including by transporting nutrients and thereby supporting life at the base of the food web. They also agreed that cetacean carcasses sequester massive amounts of carbon while increasing deep-sea biodiversity.

Given cetaceans’ potential in mitigating climate change, their protection is increasingly important. Workshop participants highlighted how the role of large whales in



WILDESTANIMAL

sequestering carbon is growing as their populations recover from decades of commercial whaling that devastated whale populations globally.


INDIAN OCEAN OIL SPILL DEVASTATES MARINE LIFE

In May, the Singapore-flagged *X-Press Pearl* container ship caught fire off the coast of Sri Lanka while traveling through the Indian Ocean. The crew was evacuated, and the ship ultimately sank. Over 1,400 containers of toxic chemicals, approximately 80 tons of tiny plastic pellets, and hundreds of tons of fuel were on board. Much of this ended up befouling the Sri Lankan coast in subsequent weeks, causing lasting devastation to the marine environment and local communities.

The Sri Lankan government has confirmed that at least 176 sea turtles, four whales, and 20 dolphins washed ashore as a consequence of the wreck. Dead fish have also washed up with plastic pellets clogging their gills and

mouths. A fishing ban was imposed to prevent people from consuming contaminated fish, creating hardship for local artisanal fishing communities. The ports and shipping minister told parliament that the Government Analyst Department and the Veterinary Research Institute were conducting investigations to ascertain the cause and magnitude of the problem, and the country is seeking financial retribution from the ship’s operator. Impacts from the released chemicals—which included nitric acid, methanol, and sodium methoxide—could last decades as they permeate the marine environment and its creatures. The plastic beads will persist much longer.

This comes on the heels of a massive oil spill in the Mediterranean Sea in February that caused what was described as one of the worst ecological disasters in Israel’s history, as thick tar from that spill spread over most of the Israeli coastline and into southern Lebanon. (See *AWI Quarterly*, summer 2021.)



A bottlenose dolphin swims near the mouth of Barataria Bay. A proposed sediment diversion plan would wipe out dolphins within the bay.

Sediment Diversion Plan Puts Dolphins in Danger

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 gave the US coast along the Gulf of Mexico a preview of things to come, as severe weather worsens with climate change. In addition, decades of flood control along the Mississippi River has changed the coastline tremendously, leading to an erosion of land and loss of wetlands and marshes. These natural buffers against storm surge and damage during hurricanes have been disappearing, and the results during Katrina were devastating.

Then came the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. Again, natural coastal features would have detoxified some of the spill, had they been left in place, but their loss clarified for many the crisis facing fisheries, tourism, other economic sectors, and wildlife—all of which rely on a healthy Gulf ecosystem. It was clear something had to be done. “Restore the Gulf” became a rallying cry in the region, and authorities are now planning ambitious efforts intended to undo some of the intensely negative effects of “taming” the mighty Mississippi over the past 100–150 years.

One such effort involves diverting sediment, freshwater, and nutrients from the river to rebuild land that has eroded over the

years. Massive diversion complexes, including channels and outfall areas, would be built at specific points along the river, allowing sediment, during times of high water, to flow into areas long cut off from this important riverine resource. Wetlands and marshes would be restored in a controlled manner, using semi-natural processes over the course of decades.

The first such project slated to move forward is the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD). The project’s goal is to rebuild approximately 20 square miles of land in Barataria Bay, Louisiana, over the next 50 years. During certain high water periods, when the Mississippi River would normally flood, sediment-rich water would be channeled at a specific location (near Myrtle Grove, within Plaquemines Parish) into Barataria Bay, changing the salinity and nutrient composition of the bay to replace open salty water with brackish marshes.

There is widespread support for this project within the environmental community, but strong opposition also exists. Absent many decades of natural flood processes of the river, Barataria Bay has become host not only to commercial and recreational fisheries that are of great value to the local

community economically, but also to a population of some 2,000 bottlenose dolphins, which constitute a distinct stock under the US Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Barataria Bay dolphins were already hard hit by the Deepwater Horizon spill; the MBSD project will do yet more damage, as dolphins are strongly and negatively affected by prolonged exposure to low salinity. AWI and groups that are specifically focused on the protection of wildlife have spoken out against this project. While restoring wetlands and marshes in the Gulf is a laudable and important goal, doing so while harming—even killing—hundreds of dolphins is simply unacceptable.

This impact would be so severe, and on a stock already suffering negative effects from a previous environmental disaster, that under normal circumstances, the MBSD project would never have received authorization to proceed under the MMPA. When it became clear to the project leaders that they could not receive permission under the law, they considered seeking a waiver to the MMPA. Waivers provide a way for activities otherwise disallowed under this precautionary statute to proceed, while still maintaining some level of protection for affected marine mammal populations. This regulatory process is rarely pursued, however, as it is (rightfully) onerous and restrictive.

The MBSD project proponents, in fact, realized that the normal waiver process could potentially take years, and there was no guarantee a waiver would be granted in the end. Therefore, in early 2018, they sought a legislative waiver to the MMPA—inserting language into a must-pass budget bill that would mandate issuance of a waiver for three specific diversion projects, including the MBSD, completely bypassing the regulatory process. This drastic end-run around the MMPA sets a very dangerous precedent that other entities, with far less noble intent, might seek to exploit. Nevertheless, the budget bill passed in February 2018 and the waiver was issued one month later. The project prepared its environmental impact

statement (EIS) as required under the National Environmental Policy Act, publishing the draft EIS in March 2021.

The flaws in issuing a legislative waiver became fully apparent when this EIS went out for public comment. Models predict the Barataria Bay dolphin stock will be effectively wiped out by the end of the 50-year operation of the diversion structure. Instead of the current 2,000 or so dolphins recovering slowly to about 3,300 dolphins by 2070, only about 140 dolphins are predicted to remain by that year under this project. These survivors will persist mostly along the barrier islands at the entrance to the bay, where dolphins would be exposed to enough salt water from the Gulf to survive the lowered salinity within the bay. (It might seem odd that the dolphins would remain in the bay once conditions deteriorate, but dolphins tend to be highly site faithful and are unlikely to relocate, regardless of the diminished suitability of their habitat and their poor health. Even those few who do venture to escape the bay's ever-lowering salinity would be in competition with neighboring dolphin stocks and unlikely to thrive.)

In short, because authorities could not impose the requirements and restrictions of the MMPA, this project is attempting to restore approximately 20 square miles of land at the cost of thousands of dolphins' lives.

AWI and other organizations submitted comments on the draft EIS, urging the Army Corps of Engineers and the project leaders to rethink their approach to Gulf restoration. The Marine Mammal Commission also submitted comments in opposition, noting that even the minimal mitigation required under the legislative waiver has not been applied. Simply put, the ends do not justify the means. Legislative waivers to environmental statutes should never be used to allow wholesale killing of entire populations of wildlife, even when the purpose—in this case, to mitigate climate change and coastal erosion—is otherwise desirable. 🐾



RODENT TRAINING VIDEO AVAILABLE ONLINE

Camilla Bengtsson and Marie Eriksson, researchers at the RISE Research Institutes of Sweden, have recently gained some international acclaim for their unique approach to handling and training laboratory mice and rats to reduce stress, anxiety, and fear. (See *AWI Quarterly*, summer 2020.) To help others implement a similar approach at their own institutions, they have produced a 55-minute training video detailing how they handle and train each species before, during, and after experiments. Thanks to a grant from AWI, this video is now available for free at bit.ly/RISEvideo4training (scroll down to “Video for training” subheading).

The video describes how each animal, regardless of how long they are to remain in the laboratory, is gently handled and habituated to any procedures they will experience in the course of a study. Handling and training are attentive to individual differences, aiming to create an environment that is as stress-free as possible for the animals and, by extension, for the people working with them.

RATS MAY RELISH MORE REFINED TICKLING TECHNIQUES

A technique that is increasingly used worldwide to improve the welfare of rats in research is rat “tickling”—whereby humans make light, brisk, and vigorous movements with their fingertips on a rat’s neck and abdomen to imitate juvenile rat rough-and-tumble play. Rat tickling is generally seen to be a positive experience for rats; for example, many “laugh” (i.e., vocalize in the 50-kHz range indicative of positive emotional state) when tickled and afterwards spend more time in locations where they were tickled and show reduced fear and anxiety to various stressors.

However, not all rats respond in the same way. The current technique relies heavily on pinning rats on their back to tickle their abdomen, because that is when they laugh the most—although some rats do not laugh at all.

AWI wholeheartedly supports techniques to better the welfare of rodents used in research. We also support efforts to make such techniques even better for animals.

In a recent opinion article published in the open access journal *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* (Bombail et al., 2021), a group of scientists proposed that tickling may not be a positive experience for all rats and that current tickling methods could be improved.

During social play, rats occasionally choose to roll onto their backs to be pinned by their play companion; during tickling, pinning is not only used much more often than during social play, but is also forced on the rat by flipping them onto their back. In order to make tickling more responsive to different rat personalities, the scientists suggest incorporating more aspects of rat play (such as chasing, sparring, and wrestling), reducing the amount of pinning, and paying attention to individual rats’ responses during each session. The authors believe that the result “would be a more inclusive tickling method that is ... likely to be a pleasant experience for more rats, including individuals [who] do not enjoy being pinned.”

APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR AWI REFINEMENT GRANT

AWI is now accepting applications for 2021 Refinement Grants! Every year, AWI awards up to US\$10,000 for research projects aimed at developing or testing creative ideas to improve the welfare of animals in research. Projects must be based in the United States or Canada. The deadline to apply is **October 8, 2021**. For more information and to apply, please visit awionline.org/refinementawards.

From armadillos to zebrafish (shown here), animals in research should be housed and handled in ways that respect the particular needs of the species. AWI provides grants to help develop and test methods to improve conditions for these animals.



BCLAY29

Pigs Love Scratching But Are Hard on Scratchers

A LAREF DISCUSSION

The Laboratory Animal Refinement and Enrichment Forum (LAREF) is an online platform, hosted by AWI, where individuals working with animals in research share ideas and experiences related to improving the welfare of animals under their care. Recently, Renee Gainer asked for recommendations for pig scratchers. Jacqueline Schwartz, Lorraine Bell, Brianna Gaskill, Evelyn Skoumbourdis, Michele Cunneen, Viktor Reinhardt, and Janneke Arts provided recommendations. Some comments have been edited for clarity or brevity.

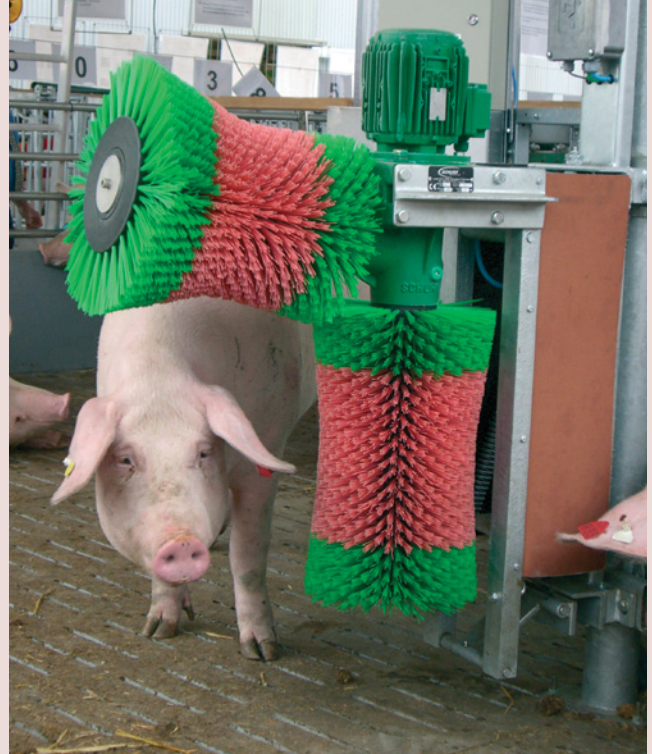
Any suggestions on pig scratchers? We've tried several and the pigs just destroy them rather than use them to scratch. Thoughts? Ideas? (Renee)

I used to use a back scratcher when I cared for pigs many years ago. Sometimes, time was an issue but I tried every chance I got! It is going to be tough to find something they can't destroy; they are masters at destruction! (Jacqueline)

Have you tried using sections of artificial grass mats? (Lorraine)

At Purdue University, colleagues and I had a master's student try to design a scratch pad for farm pigs. However, we had a lot of issues of pigs destroying them rather than scratching with them, like Renee did. The pigs really liked the coconut fiber welcome mats (to eat as much as to scratch with). We also tried the plastic mats—be careful with these, as we did have some sows with more scratch marks on their body than we expected. However, we couldn't say exactly that it was from the plastic mat. Key learning: make sure *all* the edges are well covered with something metal. If the sows get a firm hold, the mat is gone!

More than anything, they ate the coconut mat when they were hungry. Production sows are limit-fed (so they don't get fat), and we noticed one pen was not eating the mats. We realized that they were getting more feed than they should have because they had one less sow. When the food was adjusted, they destroyed the scratcher. If possible, this shows how important fiber/gut fill is for pigs. (Brianna)



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JANNEKE ARTS

Above: Pigs enjoy using specially designed brushes that auto-spin when touched.

Left: A DIY scratcher can be made by attaching a coarse brush head to the pigs' pen.

I'm a big fan of just going in and using my own hands—they love it. However, used floor buffer scrubbers are great for them. Just hang them securely in the pen. Not only is it upcycling, but it takes a while for the pigs to destroy them, which adds to the enrichment value. (Evelyn)

I like the cow ones that spin, but they are more expensive than a floor mat or floor scrubber pad. (Michele)

Michele, did you expose pigs to one of those quite ingenious cattle scratchers? I can visualize pigs having a blast with these machines. (Viktor)

Yes, and they loved it because it only spins when they touch it. So they would try different methods of touching it. The spin also prevented rooting it off the fence. (Michele)

At our animal facility we use coarse/rough brooms, just the head attached with the back/top to the wall. They love them and they keep fairly well. And they are really cheap compared to commercial options. The pigs twist around until all spots are scratched. (Janneke) 🐾



REAGAN FRYE WITH SHELTER PETS AND TOYS

Voice for Animals Contest Winners Making the World a Better Place for Animals

AWI, together with the Humane Education Network, congratulates the winners of the 2021 “A Voice for Animals” competition. Through video, photos, and essays, the contest encourages students age 14–18 to examine issues involving animal welfare and ways to reduce animal suffering. This year, several of these prize-winning submissions showcased not just the actions of the authors, but also their drive to reach other young advocates and involve their communities in efforts to improve the lives of animals.

Seventeen-year-old Manya Oswal of India submitted a video detailing the plight of street dogs, or “indie dogs,” as they are known by compassionate people like Manya. Her actions on behalf of indie dogs include securing veterinary care, establishing a telephone line to report injured animals, and recruiting young people to her foundation, “There 4 U,” which raised US\$15,000 for the purchase of an animal taxi to transport indie dogs to veterinary facilities. Although the results of Manya’s work are impressive, she finds the greatest satisfaction in simply spending time with the animals she has worked so hard to save.

Educating children about the dangers of plastic pollution is the goal of a book written by Ella McMullin. Recognizing the benefits of encouraging eco-friendly habits early in life, Ella created her publication *Spencer’s Beach Day* to capitalize on children’s natural fascination with animals. She printed copies of her book to donate to local classrooms, and visited coastal schools to share the tale of Spencer’s encounters with marine creatures affected by plastics. A read-aloud video

of Ella’s book is also available on YouTube, ensuring that its important message can reach children far and wide.

Canadian environmentalist Jordan Dearsley has been busy coordinating a series of e-waste disposal drives. In her photo essay, Jordan describes the harmful effects that toxic substances—such as those found in common electronics—can have on wildlife. The 17-year-old saw an opportunity to educate others on these impacts and to eliminate the inconveniences preventing her fellow citizens from properly disposing of their old electronics. She arranged drop-off locations and coordinated with a local group to pick up the discarded items for recycling or, when practical, repairs. Through these efforts in her community, Jordan hopes to improve the future for wild animals.

Upon learning of the impact a stressful shelter environment can have on a companion animal’s otherwise winning personality, Reagan Frye began volunteering at her local shelter with the goal of helping to keep homeless pets socialized and appealing to potential adopters. One way to do this is by providing dog toys to help alleviate boredom. Reagan recruited her classmates to help make safe, shelter-approved dog toys out of old towels and T-shirts and donated them to the shelter. While Reagan recognizes that it will take sustained involvement by many volunteers to improve the well-being of shelter animals, she plans to continue sharing her experiences and encouraging others to get involved.

To see the entire list of winners and their submissions please visit [hennet.org](https://www.hennet.org). 🐾

Spotlighting Safe Haven Services for People and Pets

In 2011, AWI's Safe Havens Mapping Project developed an integrated, comprehensive state-by-state listing of sheltering services for the animals of those experiencing domestic violence. Today, there are approximately 1,200 Safe Havens for Pets listings in the directory, accessible via the program's website (safehavensforpets.org) and the "Create a Safety Plan" section of the National Domestic Violence Hotline website (bit.ly/NDVHplan). Entries in the directory go through a rigorous reverification process to ensure the information is accurate, complete, and up-to-date.

AWI has been heartened by the positive feedback we have received from users of the Safe Havens for Pets website, as well as from local and state domestic violence organizations. To build greater awareness of the Safe Havens directory, AWI recently launched Safe Havens for Pets accounts on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Through social media, we hope to raise the profile of available safe haven programs, encourage communities to establish new programs, and strengthen collaborations among entities that seek to prevent domestic violence and animal abuse.

This work and subject matter can be emotionally heavy, so we want to express our gratitude toward those advocating for survivors and their pets and ensure they get the recognition they deserve. One of our most popular social media projects thus far has been to spotlight existing safe haven programs. We highlight the creative ways in which these programs have established themselves and call attention to what they offer. For example:

- SafeNest in Nevada allows residents to exercise and play with their pets in a safe, confidential location within shaded and fenced play areas.
- Colorado's PeaceWorks Inc. offers shelter for all animals of domestic violence survivors—exotic animals and livestock included. They also collaborate with local agencies to provide a wide array of pet mental wellness programs, including pet reiki!
- Safe Futures—Connecticut's first emergency shelter to provide safe housing for pets—shared information with us about their multiple offerings to fit the needs of each domestic violence survivor. Safe Futures' "Protect Our Pets" program includes on-site emergency sheltering services, transitional housing services, and sheltering through veterinary facilities.

Our vision is that Safe Havens for Pets will serve as a central digital hub where coalition members interact and exchange ideas, where individual safe havens share news and updates about their work, and where those seeking to establish shelters and other services for domestic violence survivors gain access to vital resources and support. We hope also to provide a platform for organizations and safe havens to share information on upcoming webinars, trainings, and available grants. We are currently soliciting feedback from individual safe havens to learn what other resources and services would be most useful.

The link between animal cruelty and domestic violence is abundantly clear, and all around the country there are remarkable individuals working tirelessly to help survivors, raise awareness, and prevent future violence. We feel incredibly privileged to have the opportunity to know and learn from these individuals and groups, and we are just scratching the surface of what AWI and Safe Havens for Pets can do to help them protect even more people and their pets. 🐾



REDUCING ANIMAL SUFFERING DURING SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS

As the country continues to battle COVID-19, the Biden administration is taking steps to strengthen the nation's commodity supply chains and ensure increased resiliency against major disruptions in the future. Almost every aspect of American society was greatly impacted by the pandemic, especially agriculture. In particular, the highly consolidated livestock and poultry sectors experienced significant disruption as slaughterhouses across the country became hotspots for infections. This forced the temporary closure of dozens of facilities, ultimately creating a surplus of healthy, market-weight animals with nowhere to go. (Due to a number of factors, the industrial farms could not simply retain these animals.) As a result, millions of chickens and pigs were killed on the farm—in many cases, inhumanely—and disposed of.

The US Department of Agriculture recently requested public comments on ways to increase the resiliency of the supply chain. AWI provided recommendations that included working with producers to develop contingency plans to help prevent mass killings of farm animals in the event of supply chain disruptions, and increasing local slaughter capacity that can serve smaller, higher welfare farmers and potentially improve animal welfare by shortening transport times.

Changes AWI proposed to the National Fire Protection Association's fire code for animal housing facilities have been approved—a move that could greatly reduce the number of animals killed in barn fires.

The USDA has already begun addressing the issue of limited slaughter capacity by announcing the availability of over \$55 million in grants for small and mid-sized meat and poultry processing facilities. The funds can be used to help cover the costs of improvements necessary to become federally inspected establishments. Previous AWI research has shown that humane slaughter oversight is higher at plants under federal inspection.

FIRE CODE REVISED TO BETTER PROTECT FARM ANIMALS

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is an international nonprofit organization seeking to eliminate death, injury, and economic loss due to fire and related hazards. It accomplishes this mission through development and publication of hundreds of consensus codes and standards to minimize the occurrence and severity of fires. These codes, including one dedicated solely to animals (NFPA 150, Fire and Life

Safety in Animal Housing Facilities) are adopted by governments and businesses throughout the world.

While NFPA 150 addresses animals used in agriculture, farmed animals are afforded a lower level of protection than other animals, even though they die from fires in far greater numbers. For example, in 2020, at least 1.6 million farm animals died in barn fires in the United States. To increase protection for farm animals, in 2018, AWI applied for and obtained membership in the technical committee that administers NFPA 150. Subsequently, AWI proposed two changes to the code, requiring that (1) emergency forces be notified of fire alarm signals from agricultural housing facilities and (2) all facilities be inspected annually to identify electrical, structural, and housekeeping fire hazards. Following a series of votes, the NFPA adopted AWI's proposed changes. The new standards are now in effect and will be included in the official 2022 edition of the NFPA 150 code.



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ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROMOTES STATEWIDE FOOD PURCHASING REFORM

In June, the Illinois state legislature adopted a joint resolution creating the Illinois Good Food Purchasing Policy Task Force. The task force is charged with studying the state's food procurement process to provide recommendations on how it can be improved using the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) as a model.

The GFPP, first developed by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, is a framework created to help major institutions use their vast purchasing power to promote five core values: animal welfare, nutrition, valued workforce, local economies, and environmental sustainability. AWI was instrumental in crafting the animal welfare section of the Good Food Purchasing Standards.

While cities and local school districts across the country have already adopted the program and are working toward implementation, Illinois is the first state to seek implementation of the GFPP.

According to the Center for Good Food Purchasing, 43 enrolled institutions and coalitions in 16 cities across the country have committed to the GFPP.

FDA SEEKS GREATER VETERINARY OVERSIGHT OF ANTIMICROBIALS FOR FARM ANIMALS

In June, the World Organisation for Animal Health reported antimicrobials used for farm animals fell by one-third from 2015 to 2017, with 156 countries reporting decreased usage. Additionally, 70 percent of countries reported they do not use antimicrobials for promoting animal growth.

Also in June, the Food and Drug Administration published guidance indicating it plans to give veterinarians oversight of all uses on animals of antimicrobials that are also important in human medicine. About 96 percent of these drugs are already administered under veterinary guidance, so the notice applies to the 4 percent available over the counter. It allows pharmaceutical companies to voluntarily change their

policies or face regulatory proceedings. The FDA stated that administration by trained veterinarians will help slow antimicrobial resistance and preserve the drugs' effectiveness in both humans and animals.

Measures ensuring responsible use are helpful, but low-stress handling and a focus on animal welfare are also essential to reducing antimicrobial use on farms and the extreme danger antimicrobial resistance poses to human health.

AWI'S LAWSUIT REGARDING TREATMENT OF NONAMBULATORY PIGS MOVES FORWARD

A federal court in New York recently denied the US Department of Agriculture's motion to dismiss claims by AWI and other organizations alleging the department has illegally failed to regulate the humane treatment of nonambulatory, "downed" (NAD) pigs—animals who are unable to walk or move on their own—at slaughter. Because of this condition, NAD pigs are disproportionately subject to inhumane handling, as workers prod, kick, and drag the animals to keep them moving at the slaughterhouse.

In 2002, Congress ordered the secretary of agriculture to investigate and report on the humane treatment of nonambulatory livestock, but the secretary failed to do so. As a result, AWI and other organizations have had to expend significant resources to ensure that the USDA carries out its responsibilities. The USDA challenged AWI's standing to sue, but the district court held that the organizations sufficiently pleaded standing and could move forward with the case, citing the significant organizational harms suffered because of the USDA's failure to regulate this situation.



CUSTOM-EXEMPT SLAUGHTER:

A License to Neglect and Abuse Farm Animals

Federal legislation known as the Processing Revival and Intrastate Meat Exemption (PRIME) Act has been reintroduced in Congress. The PRIME Act would amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act to exempt from inspection the slaughter of animals and the processing of carcasses at custom-exempt facilities. Passage of this legislation would in effect allow the retail sale of uninspected meat, creating food safety risks and increased potential for inhumane treatment of animals.

The “exempt” in custom-exempt signifies that these operations are excused from continuous inspection, unlike operations subject to state and federal inspection, where government officials are on the premises whenever slaughter is being conducted. Custom-exempt plants serve hunters who want to process wild animal carcasses; they also slaughter cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats for anyone who wants meat for themselves, their household, or nonpaying guests.

With custom-exempt slaughter, inspectors need not be present, and, in fact, inspection typically occurs only once or twice per year in the form of a “custom-exempt review.” While custom-exempt slaughterhouses are expected to comply with federal food safety regulations, inspectors are not routinely on the premises to ensure that they do so.

The US Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) revised its directive on custom-exempt slaughter in 2009 to clarify that the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) applies at these facilities. The directive instructed FSIS personnel to assess several factors, including any egregious acts or repeated noncompliance with humane slaughter, to determine whether the custom-exempt facility being reviewed is handling livestock in a humane manner.

In September 2020, the FSIS revised the custom-exempt directive to distinguish regulatory requirements from voluntary recommendations for humane slaughter. The only humane slaughter requirements identified are that (1) the animals must be effectively stunned to render them insensible to pain, (2) appropriate methods must be used when ritual slaughter is involved, and (3) conscious animals must not be dragged. Conversely, providing water and feed, maintaining the facility in good repair, handling animals without excitement and discomfort, and segregating disabled animals are identified merely as recommendations.

AWI’s Survey

In 2020, AWI initiated research to determine whether applying the HMSA to custom-exempt slaughter has

provided adequate protection to the animals killed at these establishments. We submitted Freedom of Information Act requests related to the USDA's oversight of the custom-exempt process. This included requesting all custom-exempt review forms and a list of federal custom-exempt establishments. We also reviewed FSIS inspector memorandums issued to federally inspected slaughter plants that also perform custom-exempt slaughter. Finally, we submitted questions related to the custom-exempt review process to the FSIS through its "AskFSIS" web-based application.

The Findings

1. Reviews of custom plants are not being conducted – The FSIS custom-exempt directive states that inspection personnel are to conduct reviews at custom-exempt establishments "generally at a frequency of once per year." According to the FSIS, 285 federal custom-exempt establishments were operating in 2019–2020. However, only 27 (under 10%) of those plants appear to have been reviewed in that year. While the FSIS provided us with 144 custom establishment review forms for 2019, most of the reviews were conducted at state-level plants in states that do not operate a meat inspection program. It is unclear why so few federal custom-exempt plants were reviewed.
2. Slaughter is not being observed at custom plants – Of the custom-exempt slaughter plants reviewed in 2019, FSIS inspectors documented observing the actual killing of animals at only 31 percent of them. Moreover, a significant number of reviews indicated the inspector was aware that slaughter would not even be conducted on the day of their visit. Given that the FSIS appears to be doing reviews infrequently—and when they do conduct a review, slaughter is often not observed—many years may pass before inhumane slaughter practices at a custom-exempt plant are uncovered.
3. Federal plants use custom status to dodge violations – According to FSIS records, some plants that perform both federally inspected and custom-exempt slaughter are claiming that all animals on the premises are intended for custom slaughter until just before they are killed. Because inspectors lack the authority to take regulatory control actions (such as halting slaughter or rejecting a piece of equipment or area of the plant) in response to a violation involving a custom animal, these plants may be avoiding legal consequences for inhumanely handling animals during unloading or while they are kept in holding pens, a period that sometimes lasts weeks.

4. Plants suspended from federal slaughter are allowed to operate as custom – Because enforcement actions are not taken at custom-exempt plants, these establishments may continue to hold and slaughter animals even if federal inspection has been suspended or withdrawn. For example, the FSIS took legal action in 2019 to permanently withdraw federal inspection from Harmon Brothers Meat in Warsaw, Kentucky, after the plant was suspended from performing federal slaughter on four different dates following egregious humane slaughter violations. In addition, according to AWI's records, Harmon Brothers Meat was cited for more humane slaughter violations (34) in 2016–2018 than any other livestock slaughter plant classified as "very small." Despite this atrocious record, the plant was allowed to continue killing animals for custom-exempt slaughter.
5. Animal neglect and abuse is occurring at custom plants – The records AWI reviewed suggest that animals destined for custom-exempt slaughter are being beaten, held in deplorable conditions, and deprived of food and water for extended periods. In some cases, the animals are dying as a result (see examples on next page). Current FSIS policy allows for this mistreatment, because *not* beating and *not* starving animals are considered mere recommendations.



Conclusion

AWI is unfortunately accustomed to witnessing and uncovering many forms of animal abuse, and the treatment of custom-slaughtered farm animals surely ranks among the worst. Information obtained from the USDA suggests that its purported application of the federal humane slaughter law has had little or no effect on the welfare of farm animals fated for custom-exempt slaughter. Changes are needed in the government's approach to this type of slaughter, and AWI soon will be offering several recommendations to improve the treatment of animals at these establishments.

Below are examples of USDA inspector memorandums illustrating that custom-exempt animals are afforded a lower level of care—and less legal protection—than animals designated for federally inspected slaughter. 🐾

Lack of Water

A holding pen with lambs too numerous to count was observed without adequate water; the water trough contained 3 inches of dark brown, manure-contaminated liquid. Two dead lambs were found with their bodies decomposing, and a strong ammonia smell emanated from the pen. A dead goat and a dead pig were found in other pens. The inspector noted that the outside temperature was 90 degrees, with no functioning fans in the pens, and that the Livestock Heat Index was estimated to be in the "danger" to "emergency" category. The inspector also observed that the situation involved custom-exempt animals.

—Spencer County Butcher Block (M44779), Taylorsville, KY, 7/7/2020

Unsanitary Conditions in Holding Pens

A holding pen with goats and lambs contained a dead goat and water of questionable drinking quality; the water was brown with fecal material present. Another dead goat was observed outside a storage room. An adjacent holding pen with goats and lambs was densely populated; most of the floor was covered in liquid feces, and the water was of even more questionable drinking quality. The inspector noted that the establishment was suspended from federal slaughter due to an egregious violation but was still allowed to perform custom-exempt slaughter.

—Harmon Brothers Meat (M7356), Warsaw, KY, 4/26/2019

A large boar was observed without access to water in a holding pen. Another pen of lambs and sheep was observed with feces covering the floor. Bedding was minimal and mostly wet. Urine was also observed in one area of the pen, and the fur of most of the animals was contaminated with fecal matter. One lamb was observed in a moribund state.

One small automatic waterer was functional but insufficient for the volume of animals (too numerous to count) in the pen.

—Faulkner Meats (M44779), Taylorsville, KY, 5/22/2019

Safety Hazards

Hogs designated for custom slaughter were observed in a holding pen that had a broken metal divider with exposed bolts and sharp edges, presenting a risk of injury to the pigs. A worker refused the inspector's suggestion to move the animals to another pen. The inspector explained: "I did not take regulatory control action due to the fact the current animals in the holding pen were custom exempt. In the future, if federally inspected animals were in a pen with broken railing it would be a violation."

—Mountain Meat Packing Inc (M4979), Fruita, CO, 6/24/2020

Inadequate Care of Sick and Disabled Animals

A holding pen of pigs who had been in the barn since the previous week had a soupy manure-covered floor, a small quantity of questionable quality drinking water, and one pig who appeared to have an orbital wound from the loss of an eye. A holding pen of sheep who had been in the barn for a week or more had several disabled animals among the normal population. Some were observed crippled to the point of being barely able to rise and walk. The inspector noted, "The animals observed today had not been declared for federal inspection."

—Harmon Brothers Meat (M7356), Warsaw, KY, 7/10/2018

Excessive Force Used to Move Animals

An establishment employee was observed striking a steer in the face with a broom and kicking the animal in the rear to force him to turn around. An inspector inquired if the animal was declared for federal inspection or custom-exempt slaughter. Establishment personnel stated custom-exempt slaughter. The same worker previously observed striking and kicking the steer was seen with a water hose running at full stream, first spraying the animal's hindquarters and then his face.

—Faulkner Meats (M44779), Taylorsville, KY, 9/20/2019

Inaccurate Stunning

An inspector observed a large hog being shot five times with a firearm before the animal was rendered unconscious for slaughter. After each unsuccessful attempt, the worker left the stunning area to retrieve another cartridge from a nearby vehicle. The worker commented to the inspector: "It's custom, guy. No need to worry about it!"

—Sanchez Slaughterhouse (M12455), Kauai, HI, 2/24/2020

TIGER KING CONCLUSION? DOJ STEPPING IN TO BRING DOWN LOWES

Jeff and Lauren Lowe, of *Tiger King* fame, are closer than ever to being brought to justice.

By the end of that wildly popular Netflix documentary, the couple had assumed ownership of Joe Exotic's Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park (G.W. Zoo) in Oklahoma. This zoo, long a site of deplorable animal cruelty and exploitation, continued to operate in flagrant violation of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) under the Lowes. However, in the past year and a half we have seen their crimes and cruelty catch up with them.

In June 2020, during an inspection of G.W. Zoo, the US Department of Agriculture found geriatric wolves with pressure sores, a barely responsive 16-week-old lion cub, emaciated bears, decomposing big cat carcasses, and several cases of severe myiasis—a painful infestation of fly larvae. (See *AWI Quarterly*, fall 2020.) In August 2020, the USDA suspended the Lowes' exhibitor license, meaning that they could still possess the animals but could no longer display them to the public. The USDA sought to revoke the license permanently, but the Lowes chose instead to voluntarily terminate it.

In November 2020, the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a complaint against the Lowes, alleging violations of the AWA and Endangered Species Act. The complaint described the "untimely death of animals" and the use of makeshift pyres to dispose of carcasses. It also noted that the Lowes were continuing to exhibit animals, despite surrendering their USDA license. The court directed the USDA to perform additional inspections of G.W. Zoo beginning in December 2020, during which the Lowes received citations for failing to provide the animals with adequate veterinary care, nutrition, and shelter.

In January 2021, a federal judge ordered the Lowes to surrender all their big cats under one year of age, employ a qualified veterinarian and provide veterinary care that meets the requirements of the AWA, hand over records accounting for all animals acquired and disposed of since June 2020, and stop exhibiting animals without a USDA license. A DOJ attorney stated, "The Lowes have showed a shocking disregard for both the health and welfare of their animals, as well as the law."

Four months later, in May, the Lowes were found in contempt after they failed to comply with the court order. In response, the federal government seized 68 lions, tigers, lion-tiger hybrids, and a jaguar from the Lowes' Tiger King Park. These animals went to reputable sanctuaries where they are receiving necessary care and can live out the rest of their lives in safety. In June 2021, a new DOJ filing noted that the Lowes were "unfazed" by the contempt finding and that additional sanctions were necessary, particularly because their "continued defiance of the Court's orders puts the animals in their care in danger." The filing recommends jail time, but also suggests that the Lowes could avoid additional sanctions if they surrendered their remaining animals to the government.

Capping off their spate of legal woes, Jeff and Lauren were arrested for DUIs in June. While the outcome of these legal battles is unknown, it seems likely that the Lowes' days of evading punishment are numbered. The DOJ has demonstrated remarkable dedication to protecting the animals exploited by the Lowes, and seems determined to bring these infamous abusers to justice. 🐾



An Interior appropriations bill passed by the House of Representatives this summer features measures that could help reform the BLM's misguided management approach for wild horses.



TOM TIETZ

EQUINE PROTECTION MEASURES ADVANCE

The House of Representatives passed two of AWI's equine welfare priorities as part of the transportation and infrastructure package (HR 3684). One is an amendment banning the transport of equines to slaughter. Led by Representatives Troy Carter (D-LA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and a bipartisan team of 11 other lawmakers, this measure would effectively shut down the predatory trade whereby horses are transported out of the United States to foreign slaughterhouses. The second is the Horse Transportation Safety Act (HTSA). Championed by Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN), the HTSA would prohibit the dangerous transport of horses in double-deck trailers designed for much shorter livestock.

In another positive development for equine welfare, the fiscal year 2022 House Interior appropriations bill includes strong provisions to promote the humane treatment of wild horses and burros and reform the Bureau of Land Management's misguided approach, which has long relied on removing horses from the range and keeping them in costly holding facilities. AWI successfully advocated for a portion of the BLM's budget to be set aside for the implementation and development of safe and reversible fertility control methods—such as the widely supported PZP vaccine—to help keep herds in their natural habitats.

Finally, Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Mark Warner (D-VA) recently reintroduced the Prevent All Soring

Tactics (PAST) Act (S 2295)—legislation to combat the painful and abusive practices inflicted upon Tennessee walking horses and related breeds to create an exaggerated high-stepping gait for competition. Earlier this year, a bipartisan coalition of 114 representatives and 48 senators pressed Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to reissue a rule—frozen by the prior administration—that would strengthen the Horse Protection Act and accomplish many of the PAST Act's goals.

Please ask your senators to cosponsor S 2295. You can send your senators a message through AWI's Compassion Index (awionline.org/past) or send letters via postal mail to The Honorable [full name of your senator] / US Senate / Washington, DC 20510. (If you are uncertain who your US senators are, you can call 202-224-3121.)

REFUGE FROM CRUEL TRAPPING ACT INTRODUCED IN HOUSE

AWI supported House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) in reintroducing the Refuge from

Cruel Trapping Act (HR 4716) in July. This bill would prohibit the possession or use of body-gripping traps—which endanger wildlife, people, and pets—within the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). It includes a limited exemption allowing federal personnel to use traps for wildlife management, but only after they have documented a lack of success using nonlethal methods.

The stated mission of the NWRS is to conserve land and water for the sake of “biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health.” These spaces are intended as sanctuaries where wildlife can thrive and all Americans can enjoy the great outdoors. Allowing the use of inhumane and dangerous traps is a clear violation of the NWRS's mission.

Please ask your representative to cosponsor HR 4716. Send an email directly through AWI's Compassion Index (awionline.org/NWRtrap) or a letter via postal mail to The Honorable [full name of your representative] / US House of Representatives / Washington, DC 20515. (If you are uncertain who your US representative is, you can call 202-225-3121.)

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES INCREASED FUNDING FOR RIGHT WHALE CONSERVATION

Since 2017, the alarming number of North Atlantic right whale deaths from entanglements in fishing gear and vessel strikes has been deemed an “unusual mortality event” under the Marine Mammal Protection Act by NOAA. In October 2020, new population estimates determined that about 360 right whales remain, only 70 of whom are reproductive-aged females. In 2021, a newborn was fatally struck by a small vessel off the coast of Florida. Weeks later, a severely entangled adult succumbed to his injuries and was found dead off the coast of South Carolina.

AWI is advocating increased funding in the Commerce appropriations bill for North Atlantic right whales. Last year, \$5 million was allocated toward conservation efforts, including the development of innovative, whale-safe gear. AWI and coalition partners, in coordination with Representatives Seth Moulton (D-MA), Bill Keating (D-MA), and 51 other House members,

urged the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies to increase this funding. Thankfully, the committee did so, providing almost \$17 million dollars for right whale research, conservation, and monitoring.

SENATE PASSES SHARK FIN SALES BAN

On World Oceans Day (June 8) the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act, which would prohibit the sale, purchase, and possession of shark fins in the United States, passed the Senate as part of the United States Innovation and Competition Act (S 1260). Although shark finning—the act of removing the fins at sea and discarding the body so as to make more room on board for the valuable fins—is illegal in US waters, the United States continues to serve as a transit hub for the sale of shark fins. This bill would end the United States’ role as a major player in this inhumane, global trade that claims the lives of 73 million sharks each year. While the House passed the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act in the 116th Congress, it

has not yet acted on that bill this year or on its version of the United States Innovation and Competition Act.

WILDLIFE SERVICES DIRECTED TO PURSUE NONLETHAL MANAGEMENT

Every year, the US Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services program spends millions of dollars on lethal, ineffective predator control, including chemical poisons such as M-44 sodium cyanide devices. Last year, Congress awarded the program \$1.38 million for the development of nonlethal methods. The House version of the fiscal year 2022 Agricultural appropriations bill directs the program to focus on specific nonlethal techniques, as AWI had encouraged. These include husbandry practices such as night corralling, shed lambing, attractant and carcass removal, livestock herding, and human presence.

Another of our requests—to require the program to establish clear documentation protocols for nonlethal approaches implemented in advance of any lethal control measures—was also included. And in one of the most encouraging developments, the subcommittee responded to our concerns about Wildlife Services’ lack of transparency by requiring the program to document all work on nonlethal strategies and provide Congress a report on progress in this area within 180 days.

These are promising changes, and we are grateful to Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and 20 other representatives for submitting a letter to the subcommittee with AWI’s language requests.



RAY HENNESSY



Pole to Pole, Climate Change Taking a Toll on Planetary Life

In its August 2021 report, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states, “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred.” Indeed, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of drought, searing heat, wildfires, and flooding. Formerly “extreme” events, in fact, have become the new normal. Coupled with disappearing polar ice and dramatic shifts in ecosystem structure and function, they are having deadly and expanding impacts on wildlife, biodiversity, and humans. Across the globe, few species will be spared.

Dependent on sea ice for food and reproduction, polar bears have become the poster species for what we stand to lose. Receding Arctic ice also affects the reproduction, pup survival, and feeding ecology of other ice-dependent species such as seals and walrus. Entire Arctic marine ecosystems are transforming as warming water alters ecological processes. On land, musk ox and caribou are starving as climate change causes more rain, which freezes to create impenetrable ice layers, preventing access to vegetation during the winter. Indeed, according to a January 2018 study published in *Scientific Reports*, musk ox are getting smaller due to nutritional deficiencies linked to climate change. Warming temperatures have also allowed lungworms and other parasites to expand their range, to the detriment of the health of musk ox and other species.

In Antarctica, warming waters are shifting krill habitat. This is adversely impacting a number of species, including penguins. According to a 2018 study published in *PLoS One*, a projected 40 percent decline in krill biomass in the northern Scotia Sea will result, on average, in a 30 percent decline in penguin abundance. Climate change may also have contributed to an 83 percent decline in Adélie penguin breeding pairs since 1974 within the Palmer Long Term Ecological Research region along the western Antarctic peninsula. Similarly, in 2001, scientists documented a 50 percent decline in emperor penguins over 50 years in Adélie Land, Antarctica, with a projected decline of another 50 percent by 2100.

While climate change impacts are most dramatic near the poles, its effect spans the globe. In 2019–2020, massive wildfires in Australia killed nearly 3 billion animals, including nearly 2.5 billion reptiles, 180 million birds, 143 million mammals, and 51 million frogs. An estimated 50 percent of the corals on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef have died since 1995 as a consequence of heat stress, mass coral bleaching, and ocean acidification. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, a fifth of the world’s total reef areas—critical habitat for countless species—has been lost due to reef degradation, with another 15 percent under imminent threat over the next decade.

In July 2021, temperatures rose so high in the seas near Vancouver, Canada, that marine invertebrates were cooked

alive; an estimated 1 billion small sea creatures perished in the Salish Sea. Inland, Canada's vast boreal forests are dying as warming temperatures permit endemic and invasive pest species to weaken trees, making the forests more susceptible to catastrophic wildfires. Globally, boreal forests are an important carbon sink; their decline will exacerbate the impacts of climate change.

In the contiguous United States, the changing climate is affecting many species. For example, the piping plover is harmed by rising sea levels and storm surges. Sea turtle nesting habitat is being lost to rising seas, while higher sand temperatures alter population demographics, causing more females than males to be born. Atlantic puffins in the Gulf of Maine are starving as their primary prey move north in response to warming waters. American pika (see photo, page 3) are disappearing from their rocky talus habitat between the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains as temperatures warm. Salmon habitat is being lost as stream and river temperatures increase. Moose are moving north to escape rising temperatures and booming parasite populations. And manatees are dying in response to cold weather events.

In Africa, droughts are altering ecosystems, diminishing food and water supplies, increasing the spread of disease, disrupting reproductive cycles, and increasing human-wildlife conflicts. A September 2020 study in *Science* attributed an 81 percent decline in fruit production in Gabon to the changing climate, resulting in an 11 percent decline in the condition of forest elephants. As climate change alters the range of the tsetse fly—which constrains cattle production—cattle grazing encroaches into lion-occupied habitat, creating more conflict between herders and lions.

In South America, climate change is exacerbating the myriad threats to the Amazon rainforest. A 2019 study published in

Nature Climate Change found that the impacts of climate change may even surpass the impacts of deforestation by causing a 31–37 percent decline in tree species, which, when combined with deforestation, could result in a 58 percent reduction in tree species diversity. In addition, changing land use practices in response to climate-influenced drought are likely to affect the distribution of infectious diseases, to the detriment of wildlife and livestock.

These are just a few examples among many. Climate change is expanding the range of invasive species, contributing to the spread of wildlife diseases, increasing the risk of severe wildfires, acidifying vast areas of ocean habitat, reducing habitat quality, transforming ecosystem structure, disrupting the seasonal cycles of breeding birds and their food sources, and altering species distributions. Wild species that cannot adapt—or walk, fly, swim, or slither to suitable habitat—will perish.

In 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services called for transformational change to combat the global biodiversity crisis. It recently joined forces with the IPCC to call for the same to combat the interlinked threats of climate change and biodiversity loss. Indeed, the protection of biodiversity could be critical, because elephants, whales, and beavers, to name a few, mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change.

Unfortunately, images of charred kangaroo carcasses, starving polar bears, and bleached coral reefs have had little impact on governments thus far to meaningfully address the climate crisis. Perhaps the increasing toll of human lives and suffering tied to our changing climate will. 🐾

This is part one of a two-part series. In our next issue, we will examine initiatives the Biden administration is pursuing to address climate change.





CRITTERBIZ

As predicted, eliminating federal endangered species protections for gray wolves prompted state wildlife managers to approve mass slaughter of these animals.

STATES REDOUBLE ATTACKS ON GRAY WOLVES

Since the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) stripped Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections from gray wolves across most of the country last year, the embattled animals have come under unprecedented attack in several states. In February, Wisconsin authorized the first wolf-hunting season since 2014. In less than three days, hunters (many of them using hounds) and trappers killed 218 wolves. A study by Wisconsin researchers estimated that dozens more wolves have been killed illegally in the state since ESA protections were removed.

In the Northern Rockies, Idaho lawmakers enacted a bill allowing up to 90 percent of the state's wolf population to be killed by hunters, trappers, government agencies, and private contractors. Around the same time, Montana adopted a series of bills similarly designed to dramatically reduce the state's wolf population. One

authorized snares to be used to trap wolves. Another allowed a month-long expansion of the wolf-trapping season. A third allowed night hunting of wolves, the use of bait to hunt and trap wolves, and the killing of an unlimited number of wolves by the holder of a single wolf license.

Wildlife advocates are pushing back. Several organizations have sued the USFWS, and others have petitioned the agency to exercise its emergency listing authority under the ESA to restore gray wolves in the Northern Rockies to the list of threatened and endangered wildlife.

PROGRESS TOWARD FUR-FREE FASHION

Around the world, tens of millions of animals are caged in filthy fur farms and subjected to cruel, body-crushing traps each year so their pelts can be turned into luxury fashion items. Fortunately, the global fur industry has experienced significant setbacks in

recent months: In June, Israel became the first country in the world to prohibit the sale of fur for use in fashion (in 2019, California became the first US state to do so) and Estonia became the latest European country to prohibit fur farming. Around the same time, the United Kingdom announced plans to review its fur trade policies with an eye toward strengthening its animal welfare standards. In addition, several fashion houses—including Alexander McQueen, Valentino, and Saks Fifth Avenue—recently joined a growing list of companies that have decided to stop selling animal fur products.

Meanwhile, AWI has pushed for reform of the US fur industry. We've proposed federal legislation that would phase out mink farms (by far the most common type of fur farm) and require strict reporting and inspection requirements for all fur farms. We have also urged the US Department of Agriculture to increase the transparency of the US fur industry by collecting more information about fur operations and making that data available to the public.

These changes are necessary to protect both animals and public health. The confined conditions of fur farms have resulted in the often-lethal spread of COVID-19 among thousands of farmed mink both in the United States and abroad. In a few instances, farmed mink have transmitted a mutated form of the virus back to humans. The move toward fur-free fashion is a step toward a healthier, more humane future.

BLM'S ADOPTION INCENTIVE PROGRAM UNDER SCRUTINY

On May 15, the *New York Times* published an investigation into the Bureau of Land Management's Adoption Incentive Program (AIP), which pays individuals to adopt wild horses (\$1,000 per animal). Some of these horses are winding up in the slaughter pipeline after unscrupulous "adopters" pocket the money and then unload the horses.

Shortly after the exposé broke, AWI worked with lawmakers in Congress to call for a formal audit and suspension of the program. Additionally, the House version of the Interior appropriations bill—which funds the BLM—called for a review of the program and directed the agency to strengthen contracts with adopters to avoid horses slipping through the cracks, and AWI delivered remarks on the ongoing scandal and need for significant reforms during the BLM's National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board meeting. On June 30, the BLM announced it had initiated an internal investigation of the AIP.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION SUSPENDS ANWR LEASES

The Biden administration announced in June that it would suspend all leases and leasing activities in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) until it completes a comprehensive environmental review of the program under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). According to the Department of the Interior, the review is necessary to address legal deficiencies in the previous administration's NEPA analysis of the program.

Musk ox and other wild denizens of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge have been given a reprieve from oil and gas drilling within their tundra home.

Animal protection, environmental, and Indigenous groups praised the announcement. For decades, they have opposed opening ANWR to oil and gas drilling because doing so would increase greenhouse gas emissions, risk oil spills, and destroy crucial wildlife habitat. Despite this longstanding opposition, in 2017 Congress established, for the first time, an oil and gas leasing program within ANWR's coastal plain—an area known as "America's Serengeti" for its wildness and the diversity of species that it supports, including polar bears, caribou, and vast numbers of migratory birds. The coastal plain is also sacred to Indigenous groups such as the Gwich'in people, who have relied on the area's migratory Porcupine caribou herd for millennia.

In its final days, the Trump administration conducted the first lease sale under the program. The sale fell flat, attracting only three bidders—the State of Alaska and two small oil companies—and selling only half the tracts offered, generating just a fraction of expected revenue. Such a lack of industry interest, along with the coastal plain's tremendous biodiversity and central importance to

Alaska Native people, make an obvious case for protecting, not developing, this remarkable place.

MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS KILLING BIRDS

In late May, a mysterious illness began killing songbirds in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Cases were then found in nine additional states (Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia). The symptoms of the disease include blindness or crusty eyes, lethargy, confusion, and head shaking. Scientists from a number of state and federal agencies are attempting to diagnose the illness. Although officials have not tied the spread of this illness to bird feeders, some did recommend that feeders be taken down temporarily. (Regardless, when in use, feeders should be disinfected periodically.) To help scientists solve this mystery, if you see an injured, sick, or dead bird, please consider completing a brief online questionnaire, available at nationalzoo.si.edu/bird-report.



COULANGES

The Promise of *Castor* Coexistence



ONE of the most misguided, counterproductive, and inhumane forms of wildlife management in the United States is the annual mass killing of beavers (*Castor canadensis*). Each year, tens of thousands of the reclusive animals are trapped, snared, and shot in nearly every corner of the country. Recreational trappers catch beavers for the few dollars their fur and castoreum (a secretion beavers use to mark their territories, and humans use to scent perfume and flavor food) might fetch. The federal government kills them in response to the damage they sometimes cause by felling trees and flooding roads, railroads, and agricultural lands. Most of this killing is cruel, ineffective, ecologically degrading, and unnecessary. That is why AWI is promoting tools that enable us to live with, and benefit from, these remarkable animals.

The first problem with killing beavers is that, all too often, the methods used are inhumane. Beavers are frequently strangled in neck snares and crushed in body-gripping (or “Conibear”) traps—large, rectangular devices with metal bars designed to slam shut on an animal’s body, much like a giant mouse trap. Beavers are also ambushed with steel-jaw leghold traps that smash and hold their feet and limbs. Some traps are designed to hold beavers underwater until they drown. Because they are physiologically adapted to holding their breath while they dive for long periods, however, death by drowning is a slow process for beavers.

Conibears are theoretically designed to kill quickly by slamming spring-loaded bars together on the captured animal’s neck and causing rapid loss of consciousness. However, if a beaver enters the trap at an indirect angle, or a nontarget animal such as an otter, turtle, or heron triggers the trap, it could slam shut on another part of the body, like the abdomen or a limb, causing immense pain and suffering and a prolonged death. Other traps, such as legholds, are designed to restrain the captured animal alive until shot, clubbed, or suffocated by the trapper. Many states, however, allow traps to remain unattended for days at a time. Others have no trap-check requirements at all.

Killing beavers is also ecologically detrimental. Beaver ponds and lodges provide shelter and food for countless species of fish, birds, insects, and mammals, including threatened and endangered wildlife. Beaver ponds produce a wide variety of aquatic insects and lush riparian vegetation, which serve as food and shelter for dozens of species of waterfowl and migratory birds. Trees killed by flooding attract woodpeckers and provide excellent nesting habitat for many types of birds. Salamanders, frogs, newts, and toads use beaver ponds as breeding habitat. Dozens of fish species have been documented in beaver ponds. Moose are attracted to willows that flourish in beaver-created wetlands.

Beaver-altered landscapes provide additional benefits. Studies indicate that beaver-dammed riparian areas are three times more resistant to fire than surrounding areas and can provide refuges for wildlife during and

immediately after wildfires. Beaver ponds help mitigate the negative effects of climate change by lowering overall stream temperature and storing water that can be accessed by animals and vegetation during times of drought. Beaver dams can also improve water quality by reducing sedimentation and removing toxins from the water column.

Furthermore, killing beavers disrupts families—adult males and females live in monogamous pairs with their offspring. When they are old enough, the young will help their parents repair dams and lodges and may help care for newborns.

Killing beavers not only raises welfare and ecological concerns, it is rarely, if ever, necessary. First, fur trapping today is predominantly a recreation, not a livelihood. In 2015, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conducted a survey of trappers in all 50 states. One survey question asked how important trapping was as a source of income. In response, only 5 percent of trappers said it was “very important,” 16 percent said it was only “somewhat important,” while 78 percent said it was “not at all important.”

Second, beavers don’t need to be killed to protect property. Trees can be shielded by encircling them with wire mesh fencing or coating their trunks with a mixture of paint and sand that deters beavers from chewing. Roads, crop fields, and other human property can be protected from flooding caused by beaver dams through the use of water flow control devices—systems of pipes and fences that allow a certain amount of water to flow through the dam, thus maintaining the pond at a level acceptable to humans yet still beneficial to beavers and the myriad species that use beaver habitat.

Critically, flow devices can also prevent beavers from plugging culverts (pipes that funnel water under roads and railroads). Culvert-protective fencing has repeatedly proven effective at preventing beaver-caused blockages. Several studies indicate that heavy-duty wire mesh fencing installed in a rectangular or trapezoidal configuration upstream of the culvert provides a durable solution. This approach is not only dependable but also cost effective. A study conducted in Virginia compared the costs of repairing road damage caused by beavers at 14 sites before and after the use of flow devices. It calculated that the “before” costs of preventive road maintenance, damage repairs, and lethal removal of beavers was more than \$300,000 *per year*. By contrast, it found that the costs of installing flow devices involved a *single expense* of less than \$45,000 and maintenance costs of just \$277 per year.

To help promote the use of such ethical, ecologically responsible, and affordable solutions, AWI has long supported the efforts of the Beaver Institute, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit organization that educates the public about how beavers benefit ecosystems, works with landowners and local governments to install flow devices and other preventive measures, and trains wildlife professionals how to properly install and maintain them. AWI is also working to develop a federal program that would provide local governments, agencies, and conservation organizations across the country with resources to implement nonlethal beaver-conflict solutions. In doing so, we are enthusiastic participants in the rapidly expanding community of experts and advocates who recognize the feasibility and promise—for wildlife, humans, and the ecosystems upon which we all rely—of coexisting with *Castor*. 🦫





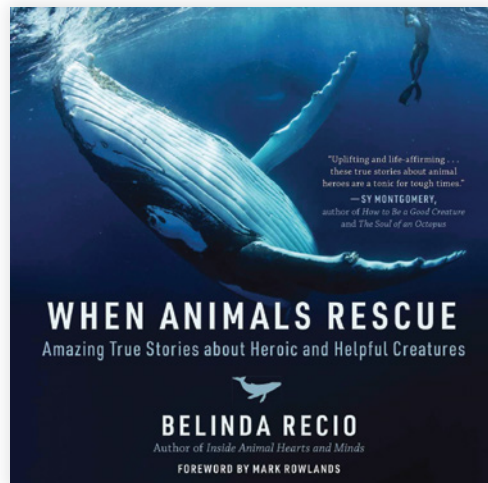
A MOST REMARKABLE CREATURE

Jonathan Meiburg / Knopf / 384 pages

In 1833, Charles Darwin encountered and was intrigued by incredibly social and clever birds known as caracaras, as documented in his field notes. He was puzzled and fascinated by the oddly crow-like birds who were “tame and inquisitive ... quarrelsome and passionate,” and were so innately curious they took to stealing compasses, hats, and various valuables from the crew of the *Beagle*.

Darwin wondered why these birds were confined to remote islands off the coast of South America. He felt that there was a bigger story, but set his caracara curiosities aside and never returned to it. Nearly two hundred years later, in *A Most Remarkable Creature: The Hidden Life and Epic Journey of the World's Smartest Birds of Prey*, Jonathan Meiburg picks up where Darwin left off.

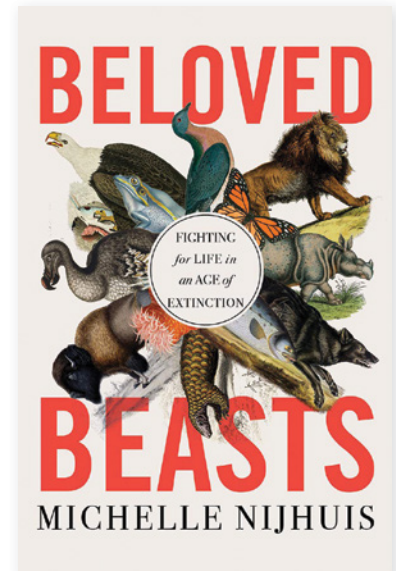
The book begins with Meiburg's first encounter with the species during a visit to Sea Lion Island in the Falklands. A chance discovery of the body of a caracara who was likely killed by a peregrine falcon leads the author on a deep dive



WHEN ANIMALS RESCUE

Belinda Recio / Skyhorse / 168 pages

More and more, advances in animal cognition research are changing the ways in which people perceive animals. Belinda Recio's latest book, *When Animals Rescue: Amazing True*



Stories about Heroic and Helpful Creatures, powerfully contributes to this change by allowing readers to look beyond the data.

Recio shares instead the unexpected anecdotal experiences and observations people have had with all kinds of animals over the years, from stories of whales and seals protecting people in life-threatening situations to acts of kindness and empathy between the most unlikely species. She recounts, for instance, a story about a crow who raises a kitten, forming a lifelong friendship, and another about a hippopotamus risking danger to rescue a young wildebeest. With every account, it's nearly impossible to overlook precisely how alike human and nonhuman animals can behave in certain situations.

Animal enthusiast or not, anyone at any age with an inquisitive nature will enjoy the 45 stories detailed in *When Animals Rescue*. Throughout the book, each chapter is coupled with captivating photographs illustrating kindness in the animals being described, helping bring Recio's words to life.

The author artistically balances her storytelling with relevant science, for instance, by discussing the potential role of spindle neurons in fostering altruism in marine mammals, or comparing the biology of humans and other animals to examine why some behaviors strike us as human-like.

Ultimately, the stories Recio has put together will inspire readers to live with greater compassion and empathy. After all, if a pack of lions can lead to a young girl's rescue and creatures as small as mice can show compassion, surely people are capable of looking beyond differences and being kinder. *When Animals Rescue* will transform how readers perceive animals and encourage people to practice kindness in every walk of life.

BELOVED BEASTS

Michelle Nijhuis / W. W. Norton & Company / 352 pages

Beloved Beasts: Fighting for Life in an Age of Extinction, by Michelle Nijhuis, is a cross between a Ken Burns-style historical documentary and the 2016 film *Hidden Figures*, bringing to life the history of key players who helped promote wildlife and wildlands conservation. While Nijhuis highlights the restoration of the American plains bison, bald eagle, and whooping crane, it is the stories about the conservation champions featured in the book that make it a compelling read.

From Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to CRISPR genetic technology, from the millinery trade to Namibian wildlife conservancies, and from Carl Linnaeus, the father of modern taxonomy, to Michael Soulé, the father of conservation biology, Nijhuis covers a panoply of issues, species, and personalities in this well-researched ode to conservation.

Those featured in *Beloved Beasts* represent a walk through conservation history. While some of the people referenced in the book (such as Darwin and President Theodore Roosevelt) are well known to the general public, many (such as Linnaeus, Aldo Leopold, William Hornaday, Rosalie Edge, Julian Huxley, Rachel Carson, Soulé, and Garth Owen-Smith) may be less familiar to those outside the conservation field.

From Hornaday's killing of some of the last few bison for a museum exhibit to his successful efforts to restore the species, or from Edge's role in creating Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, it is the adventures, linkages, and accomplishments of those featured in *Beloved Beasts* that highlight the important, yet underappreciated, role such people have played in advancing conservation.

Beloved Beasts does not provide a blueprint for saving imperiled species, and it fails to adequately scrutinize whether trophy hunting plays any role in wildlife conservation. Nevertheless, by sharing the stories of those responsible for the modern conservation movement, it challenges present-day and future conservationists to do their part in saving the planet's myriad inhabitants.

Bequests

If you would like to help assure AWI's future through a provision in your will, this general form of bequest is suggested: *I give, devise and bequeath to the Animal Welfare Institute, located in Washington, DC, the sum of \$ _____ and/or (specifically described property).*

Donations to AWI, a not-for-profit corporation exempt under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), are tax-deductible. We welcome any inquiries you may have. In cases in which you have specific wishes about the disposition of your bequest, we suggest you discuss such provisions with your attorney.



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HSUS

OIG REPORT EXPOSES RECORDKEEPING CHAOS AT USDA ANIMAL CARE

In another indictment of the US Department of Agriculture's lax enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), a new report from the department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) criticizes the USDA Animal Care (AC) program's reporting system and, more alarmingly, its lack of "a documented process for responding to complaints or for recording the results of the agency's actions." Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the OIG was unable to observe inspections and so could not undertake the third portion of its mission, to "ensure breeder compliance with the AWA."

The OIG found AC's recordkeeping system so deficient and unreliable that it impeded the ability of the program "to make informed management decisions, identify trends in noncompliant items, and identify how many inspections have been completed." AC was unable to provide the OIG with a "complete list of all active licensed dog breeders and associated inspections" for a three-year period. Although during the period of this audit AC had begun to transition to a new recordkeeping system, it is clear that the former system did a

great deal of damage to the USDA's ability to take action against noncompliant entities. The OIG cautioned AC to ensure that the new system doesn't replicate the problems of the old one.

Even worse was the OIG's findings that AC had no consistent procedures for responding to or resolving complaints or documenting its actions. "As a result, some dog breeder facilities may be conducting regulated activities without a USDA license or oversight. Therefore, APHIS is not able to ensure the overall health and humane treatment of animals at these facilities."

In other words, after nearly 60 years of enforcing one of the country's most significant animal protection laws, the department still has not figured out how to handle complaints, follow up on possible unregulated activity, or protect many of the animals who are its responsibility.

The report can be found at bit.ly/USDAACreport. 🐾