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The ASPCA: Just the Facts

- Founded by New York aristocrat Henry Bergh, the ASPCA[®] (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals[®]) was the first organization in the United States devoted to the prevention of cruelty to animals.
- As part of its original charter from the State of New York in 1866, the ASPCA was given the legal authority to investigate and make arrests for crimes against animals.
- One of the earliest convictions of animal cruelty occurred in 1867, when David Heath was sentenced to 10 days in prison for beating a cat to death.
- The ASPCA prompted the New York State legislature to pass the country's first effective anti-cruelty law.
- In 1874, Henry Bergh helped organize the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCC), which grew out of the abuse of a nine year-old girl named Mary Ellen.
- The ASPCA's Humane Law Enforcement department (HLE) is the only law enforcement group in New York City solely devoted to investigating crimes against New York's animal population.
- The HLE department has the ability to respond to cruelty complaints within New York State. However, their efforts are primarily focused on the five boroughs of New York City.
- In 2006, HLE investigated 4,191 cases of suspected animal cruelty that resulted in 103 arrests and 295 seized animals.
- ASPCA HLE agents and investigators rescued more than 200 animals after the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.
- It is estimated that there are up to five million owned and stray animals living in New York City. There are more than eight million people living in New York City.
- The New York City Police Department (NYPD) has approximately 41,000 officers to protect and serve the human population; the ASPCA's HLE department has 18 uniformed and plainclothes officers for the entire animal population of New York City.

- In 1867, the ASPCA operated the first ambulance anywhere for injured horses—two years before New York’s Bellevue Hospital put into service the first ambulance for humans.
- In 1894, the ASPCA assumed the job of caring for New York City’s stray and unwanted animals, a function previously performed by New York City government. After 100 years, the ASPCA declined the option to renew the contract in order to focus on national education, information and advocacy.
- In 2006, the ASPCA’s Pet Adoption Center found homes for 2,253 dogs and cats.
- In 2006, the ASPCA’s Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital treated 24,120 animals.
- The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is the only facility of its kind staffed by five veterinary assistants, 10 certified veterinary technicians, nine board-certified toxicologists/veterinary toxicologists and 16 veterinarians. The center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The ASPCA Animal Behavior Center offers assistance to people whose pets have specific behavioral problems.
- The ASPCA Counseling Services department offers bereavement counseling to people whose pets have died.
- ASPCA attorneys and staff work with legislators to sponsor and support animal welfare legislation and initiatives that provide greater protection for animals under the law.
- In 2006, National Outreach provided on-site visits and expertise to shelters in 29 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Turkey; presented 337 training seminars and workshops to shelter professionals across the U.S.; and provided \$6,735,993 in grants to 200 animal protection organizations in 43 states, plus Puerto Rico and Jamaica.
- Today, more than one million supporters throughout North America help the ASPCA carry out its life-saving mission.

About the ASPCA®

Founded in 1866, the ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) was the first humane organization established in the Americas, and today has more than one million supporters throughout North America. A 501 [c] [3] not-for-profit corporation, the ASPCA’s mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. The ASPCA provides local and national leadership in animal-assisted therapy, animal behavior, animal poison control, anti-cruelty, humane education, legislative services, and shelter outreach. The New York City headquarters houses a full-service, accredited animal hospital, adoption center, and mobile clinic outreach program. The Humane Law Enforcement department enforces New York’s animal cruelty laws and is featured on the reality television series “Animal Precinct” on Animal Planet. For more information, please visit www.aspc.org.

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The ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) A History

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®, or the ASPCA® as it is known, was North America's first humane society and was founded by Henry Bergh on April 10, 1866. Shortly after its founding, the ASPCA began serving as the inspiration and model for the formation of SPCAs and humane societies across the country.

Bergh was the son of a wealthy New York City shipbuilder who enjoyed travel and the theater. While serving as a diplomat in St. Petersburg, Russia, he was inspired to dedicate the rest of his life to the protection of animals. On his return to the United States, he stopped in London, England, to meet with representatives of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to learn how their organization functioned.

Shortly after his return to New York City, he organized a meeting of influential business and political leaders at Clinton Hall on February 8, 1866. Bergh gave a speech enumerating the many terrible deeds done to animals, the important role that animals played and the need for a society to protect them. The original charter for the ASPCA listed the names of many prominent New Yorkers, including Horace Greeley, members of the Rockefeller family and the mayor of New York. Just nine days after the charter was granted by the New York State Legislature, Bergh convinced the Legislature to pass an anti-cruelty law that gave the new Society the authority to enforce it.

From the very start, the ASPCA was actively publicizing the plight of animals, and intervening on their behalf. One of the first cases that Bergh and the new ASPCA brought before the court was that of a cart driver beating his fallen horse with a spoke from one of the cart wheels. This event would eventually be depicted in the seal adopted by the ASPCA, showing an avenging angel rising up to protect a fallen horse.

Within its first year of existence, the ASPCA and Bergh would address many of the same questions that occupy the efforts of his successors at the ASPCA and other humane societies, including the treatment of farm animals, dog fighting, horses used to pull trolleys, turtles transported for food and vivisection.

Recognizing the difficulty of coordinating the efforts of a far ranging national organization, Bergh encouraged and helped others to start independent SPCAs across the country. The ASPCA became the model for hundreds of other societies, with many of them using a variation of the SPCA name, the charter and even the seal. The first such society was founded in 1867 in Buffalo, New York and included Millard Fillmore, C. J. Wells and William G. Fargo among its supporters. Boston, San Francisco and Philadelphia soon followed.

Bergh's aggressive tactics soon earned him a host of enemies. The carting and transportation companies that depended on horses, butchers, dog fighters and gentleman fox hunters soon sent up an outcry that the ASPCA was interfering with their business and affairs. In 1870 Bergh and the ASPCA were hard pressed to defeat efforts to limit its charter and weaken the anti-cruelty laws. The issues in these early years were frequently played out in the pages of the newspapers. Stories about the ASPCA's arrests, court cases, and rescues of animals were given great attention. In addition, Bergh wrote many letters to the papers to explain the actions of the ASPCA and to point out problems that needed to be addressed. The newspapers were soon in the middle of a long feud between two of America's most famous men, Henry Bergh and P.T. Barnum. Bergh would attack Barnum on the care provided for the animals in his menagerie or performing in his shows. Barnum would defend his practices and use the publicity from the dispute to attract even larger

crowds. Over time, Barnum would become a grudging admirer of Bergh and the work of the ASPCA and eventually helped to form an SPCA in Connecticut.

In 1873 Henry Bergh and the ASPCA's attorney, Elbridge Gerry, helped to rescue a young girl from an abusive home. The "Mary Ellen case" would lead to a myth that Bergh claimed she deserved at least the protection provided for animals. The case did, however, lead to the formation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the movement for child protection.

The ASPCA helped to change the way that Americans thought about animals. The organization also helped to introduce a number of innovations that provided for their care and protection. Bergh helped to design and introduce an ambulance for horses, and promoted an early version of the "clay pigeon" as a target for shooters instead of live pigeons. This innovation continued in the 1950s when the ASPCA helped with the design and implementation of equipment for the humane slaughter of animals for food.

The ASPCA's hands-on services in New York City would grow to include an animal hospital and animal shelters. For one hundred years—from 1894 to 1994—the ASPCA would provide animal control services for the City of New York. During this time hundreds of thousands of animals would be rescued by ASPCA ambulances, treated in clinics, sheltered and placed in new homes when possible. Before the ASPCA assumed the animal control duties for New York City, unwanted dogs were drowned in an iron cage lowered into the river. During the following century, the methods employed to euthanize unwanted dogs and cats would evolve from the use of gas, to decompression chambers and ultimately to sodium pentobarbital injection. At the same time the promotion of responsible care of companion animals, including spaying and neutering helped to reduce the numbers of animals euthanized by 90 percent.

Today, the ASPCA continues to function as one of the world's largest humane societies. It operates the Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital and a shelter in New York City, and its humane law enforcement agents enforce the anti-cruelty laws in the five boroughs of New York City. The ASPCA also promotes education and legislative activities that fulfill the original mission described for the organization by its founder Henry Bergh, "...to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States."

During the ensuing decades, the ASPCA continued to lead the way with a wide variety of innovations from horse ambulances to the cardboard boxes that people use to carry home the pets they adopt (this was devised by an ASPCA shelter clerk). Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital was an early leader in radiation therapy for cancer in animals and the Bergh bandage provided a secure and safe support for orthopedic injuries. During World War I, ASPCA veterinarians helped care for the horses used by the U.S. Army.

Legislative efforts have helped to provide enhanced legal protection for animals throughout the country. The development of the Web of Life humane education program now provides teachers, children, parents, and librarians with integrated and up-to-date materials to foster the growth of the humane ethic.

The 1996 addition of the Animal Poison Control Center to the ASPCA's family provides an important service to pet owners and veterinarians everywhere. Its location in Urbana, Ill., provides the ASPCA with a strong presence in the Midwest to complement the New York City Headquarters and regional staff located throughout the country.

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FACTS ABOUT ANIMAL SHELTERING

Across the United States, staff and volunteers in animal shelters and animal control facilities see the results of irresponsible pet ownership and dog and cat overpopulation every day. However, there is very little reliable data available to illustrate this issue on a national level. The following figures were gleaned from independent random studies and the best estimates by experts in the animal welfare and related fields. These should be considered ballpark figures only. Most of the studies were national and there is tremendous variation by region.

There are about 5,000 community animal shelters nationwide that are independent; there is no national organization monitoring these shelters. The phrases “humane society” and “SPCA” are generic terms; shelters using those names are not part of the ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) or the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Currently, no government institution or animal organization is responsible for tabulating national statistics for the animal protection movement.

2007 Figures

Animal Shelters

- Approximately five to seven million companion animals enter animal shelters nationwide every year and approximately three to four million are euthanized due to a lack of space or resources to adequately care for them (60 percent of dogs and 70 percent of cats). Shelter intakes are about evenly divided between those relinquished by owners and those picked up by animal control. These are national estimates; the percentage of euthanasia may vary from state to state.
- Less than two percent of cats and only 15 to 20 percent of dogs are returned to their owners.* Most of these were identified with tags, tattoos or microchips.
- Twenty five percent of dogs that enter local shelters are purebred.*
- Only 10 percent of the animals received by shelters have been spayed or neutered. Seventy five percent of owned pets are neutered.

Pet Overpopulation

- The average number of litters a fertile cat produces is one to two a year; the average number of kittens in litters is between four and six.
- The average number of litters a fertile dog produces is one a year; the average number of puppies in litters is between four and six.
- It is impossible to determine how many stray dogs and cats live in the US; estimates for cats alone range up to 70 million.
- Owned cats and dogs generally live longer, healthier lives than strays.
- Many strays are lost pets that were not kept properly indoors or provided with identification.

Pet Ownership

- About 63 percent of all households in the United States have a pet.⁺
- About 75 million dogs and about 85 million cats are owned in the United States.⁺
- About 65 percent of pet owners acquire their pets free or at low cost. *
- The majority of pets are obtained from acquaintances and family members. Fifteen to 20 percent of dogs are purchased from breeders, 10 to 20 percent of cats and dogs are adopted from shelters and rescues, and two to 10 percent are purchased from pet shops.⁺⁺⁺
- At least 20 percent of cats are acquired as strays.*
- More than 20 percent of people who leave dogs in shelters adopted them from a shelter.*
- The cost of spaying or neutering a pet is less than the cost of raising puppies or kittens for one year.
- The average cost of basic food, supplies, and medical care and training for a dog or cat is \$775 annually (with the average cost for cats being \$700 and the average cost for dogs being \$875).⁺

All data are ASPCA estimates unless otherwise indicated.

⁺ Source: 2007/2008 APPMA (American Pet Products Manufacturers Association) National Pet Owners Survey.

⁺⁺ Source: The Pet Food Institute.

* Source: The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPPSP).

⁺⁺⁺ Source: Ralston Purina and NCPPSP.

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