



## New York Takes a Lead in Feline Protection

All too often, the end of lobbying on behalf of animals with NY State's Assembly and Senate results with no successes, but this year we are delighted to report that the bill to prevent declawing cats (unless for health reasons) passed both the Assembly and Senate with huge support, and was signed into law by Governor Cuomo. As a result, New York has become the first state in the nation to prohibit this cruel practice, which may result in New York improving its national ranking in regard to animal protection from its current poor standing of 33 out of 50, as evaluated by the national Animal Legal Defense Fund.

NYSHA has lobbied on behalf of this legislation for many years. The main opposition has been from the New York State Veterinary Medical Society, who have prevailed in blocking passage of the bill, not due to greed (as many pet owners have accused them), but rather because they have felt that this is a veterinary decision and believe the public has no right to limit Society members from determining what is best for their patients. They express concern that this passage of the anti-declawing legislation opens the door to prohibiting other practices such as debarking/devocalizing dogs and cats—euphemistically termed “bark-softening” by practitioners who perform these drastic surgeries.

Additionally, the NYSVMS supported their opposition based on outdated and inaccurate “facts,” such as that declawing is necessary for immunocompromised patients, and that not declawing cats will result in their increased relinquishment to shelters and decreased adoption rates if they are not declawed. These “facts” are no longer true: the 10 municipalities in California and Colorado have seen decreased relinquishment and increased adoptions since their bans became law, and the majority of medical organizations support declaw bans since



*All the cat paws in NY are now safe from declawing.*

declawed cats are more likely to bite, which constitutes a greater threat to human health.

NYSHA would like to commend Governor Cuomo for his enlightened approval, and especially commends The Paw Project for their invaluable lobbying efforts in our state. We are proud that Dr. Holly Cheever, NYSHA's Vice President, was a member of the Paw Project's leadership team as co-director in New York, working MANY YEARS on this long-awaited protection for our feline friends!

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## Senate Hearing on Welfare of Racehorses Now on NYSHA Website

NYSHA, Horseracing Wrongs, and Responsible Animal Care were instrumental in working with Senator Joseph Addabbo's office to conduct a Senate hearing on the welfare and aftercare of racehorses. On June 5 in Albany, numerous veterinarians and representatives from humane groups, as well as those from the racing industry, testified before the Senate Standing Committee on Racing, Gaming and Wagering and the Standing Committee on Domestic Animal Welfare.

We believe it was valuable for the Senators to hear from experts, with firsthand experience in the racing business, about the dark side of

racing and the exploitation of the horses. Thousands eventually go to slaughter because of the shortage of facilities and homes after their career has ended.

On NYSHA's website – [nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org) – you can view the proceedings, either individual speakers or the entire hearing. We are featuring the testimony of those who we feel advocate for the health, safety, and lives of these animals exploited by the racing industry. We urge you to listen to what is really happening to these beautiful creatures. Our sincere thanks to our volunteer, Linda Rydant, for her time and technical know-how to go through all the steps to get this on our website.

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## President's Message

It has been a disturbing summer with devastating things happening to cats in our area – cats who have been outside, either due to their owners' belief that they should be allowed to “experience” nature or due to abandonment or the practice of trap-neuter-release (TNR). The following stories could have been avoided.

A friend recently hit a cat as she was driving down her country road and was devastated, as any of us would be. She was unable to find the cat when it ran off. Although she searched for the cat and the owners all day, it was not until evening that she was successful. They had been away and when they returned, they heard their cat crying in the backyard. They assumed she had been in a cat fight and put her on a blanket in their living room to “observe” her, thinking she would start feeling better after a little rest. When my friend informed them that she had hit the cat that morning, they rushed the cat to their veterinarian, who determined she had a fractured pelvis. Hopefully, with rest and medications, the cat will recover. The couple said that this was a “wake-up call,” and they would no longer let their cats outdoors.

Another cat was not so fortunate. NYSHA received a call for assistance with an injured stray who had a huge abscess on the side of his face and neck. The unsociable cat had been seen in the caller's neighborhood for a few weeks. The caller had been feeding him, but now he appeared to have been attacked by something, and due to his wound, could not eat and was rapidly losing weight. We told her we would help once she caught the cat in a humane trap that she had. That night, her neighbor found the cat lying in the road, suffering, but unapproachable. The neighbor's husband shot the poor creature to put him out of his misery. Actually, that was probably a more humane end than trying to trap and transport this unfortunate, suffering animal to a veterinarian.

An equally tragic incident occurred when a local man, who lives in a semi-rural area and truly loves his two cats, let them outside but would bring them in at night. He was another believer in the adage that cats need to go outside. Sadly, one night only one cat returned. The next morning he went into the woods searching for the other one and was horrified to find half of her body. He called one of our

## NYSHA's Calendar

October 19 & 20 : Visit NYSHA's table at **Hudson Valley VegFest** at BSP, 323 Wall St., Kingston, NY. For information: [vegevents.com/events/hudson-valley-vegfest-2019/](http://vegevents.com/events/hudson-valley-vegfest-2019/)

September 15 – 21: **National Farm Animals Awareness Week**, created to shed light on the plight of farm animals raised in factory farms.

October: **Adopt-a-Shelter-Dog Month**

November: **Adopt-a-Senior-Pet Month**

Nov. 3–9: **National Animal Shelter and Rescue Appreciation Week** celebrates shelters across the nation caring for homeless animals. Get to know your local shelter, learn about the services it provides to animals and the community, and show your appreciation by leaving a donation..

volunteers sobbing. He also called the police fearing foul play, but the conclusion drawn by the police and a veterinarian who examined the remains was that a coyote had killed his beloved companion. As if to bring that point home, one of my neighbors recently told me that, as she was driving home one evening, she saw a coyote cross the road with a cat dangling from its mouth. According to research, cats are common victims of coyotes.

Outdoors is too dangerous for your treasured cats as all these incidents demonstrate. Also please keep in mind that with hunting season approaching, if you live near woods, it may be especially hazardous for your cat to venture out. NYSHA advises everyone to keep their cats indoors – period – where they will be safe.

Always be kind to animals,

Patricia Valusek

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## Horseracing Wrongs



Over the years NYSHA has supported or worked with many other animal protection organizations. One near and dear to our hearts is Horseracing Wrongs (HW), based in Albany. Founded by Patrick Battuello and led by him with Nicole Arciello, HW is now the foremost group calling for the end of the brutal business of horse racing, gaining national attention in print and visual media. It is the only organization that daily tracks the deaths of racehorses across the country. Horseracing Wrongs is currently sponsoring, or has sponsored, protests at 24 tracks in 17 states. (See statistics and articles at [horseracingwrongs.org](http://horseracingwrongs.org).)

This past summer we made a significant contribution toward a billboard by Horseracing Wrongs on a major highway leading to the Saratoga Race Course, and NYSHA representatives participated in protests, organized by HW, outside the entranceway to the track. With 15 equine deaths (and counting), it was another terrible season. NYSHA will continue dedicating our efforts and working with others to educate about and try to eliminate this brutal and cruel “sport.”

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## An Encore -- Cruelty Investigation Workshop in Sullivan Co.

NYSHA has held workshops in Sullivan County before and returned once more at the request of several individuals interested in having police agencies throughout the county learn the nuts and bolts of investigating animal cruelty. Numerous agencies were represented at the May workshop at the Emergency Training Center in Swan Lake. Along with NYSHA's experienced roster of speakers, District Attorney James R. Farrell did an excellent presentation on how to make the best case possible when handling animal cruelty. Attendees told NYSHA representatives how much they appreciated the training.

In June, NYSHA again supported Little Brook Farm (B.I.T.S.) in Old Chatham in its first rate, yearly training workshop on investigating equine neglect. NYSHA's speaker, retired NYS Police Investigator Susan McDonough, teamed up with Dr. Steve Naile, veterinarian, to train police and others on how to recognize neglect and abuse in equines. In addition, Little Brook staffers gave the attendees an opportunity for hands-on contact with various rescued horses so they would feel more confident when dealing with such large animals. NYSHA has supported this worthwhile training for several years and believes it is making a difference in the ability of police to respond to horse neglect complaints.

Because of the success of the Little Brook Farm workshop, NYSHA plans to reproduce this training module in September in Essex County, working with Dr. Naile, the Crane Mountain Valley Horse Rescue, and the Essex County Sheriff's Office.



*Sullivan DA James R. Farrell, ACO and CARE founder Joanne Gerow, and NYSHA speaker Dr. Harry Hovel.*

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## Our Voices in Albany – A Major Victory!

Successes and failures occurred in the array of legislation that NYSHA supported this session. The big win was the passage of a bill to ban cat declawing that was signed into law by the Governor. Our lead article focuses on the importance of this victory and the role NYSHA's VP, Dr. Holly Cheever, played in its passage.

NYSHA also supported the successful legislation submitted by Senator Metzger and Assemblywoman Paulin relating to the care of animals in pet dealer facilities. It requires that animals be provided with diurnal light cycles of either natural or artificial light; separate and adequate spaces for pregnant or nursing dogs; thorough sanitation of housing and food receptacles; and regular grooming to prevent matting, overgrown nails, and flea infestation. This legislation advances the well-being of animals kept in dealer facilities statewide.

Senator Lanza and Assemblywoman Rosenthal sponsored a successful bill, signed by the Governor, which allows emergency personnel and first responders to rescue animals from distress who are trapped inside

vehicles. Prior to this legislation, only law enforcement personnel could legally rescue those who were suffering inside cars in the stifling heat or freezing cold. This was a real advance for the wellbeing of animals.

Although there were these successes, numerous worthy animal bills made no headway. Especially disappointing was the failure to pass a very important one that would have moved the animal cruelty laws from the Agriculture and Markets Law to the Penal Law, where they once were and should be returned. Also, the legislature did not pass any of the bills that would improve the lives of horses, especially racehorses. So next session, we must try again, and with your help and support, we will succeed in passing many laws to advance the humane treatment of animals.

And a reminder -- please call your federal representatives and demand that they act to retain the protections of the Endangered Species Act, which is currently being weakened. We can't stand idly by while species perish.

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## The Vet Is In – Changing Seasons

As the summer wanes with autumn right around the corner, it is not too early to consider whether you and your pets are ready for the next season's issues impacting your companions' health.

- Has your dog or cat had his/her annual examination, which is easier to manage (for many of us) in good weather?
- External parasite control: fleas and ticks can persist right up to the first series of frosts, so keep using anti-tick and flea medication, oral or topical, until there is a sufficient number of killing frosts to eliminate the unwanted pests that can cause a range of illnesses.



- As for heartworm prevention, the American Heartworm Association recommends that you give the preventative medication once monthly, year-round.
- If you travel on holiday or seasonal trips with your pets, be sure that you have copies of their proof of Rabies vaccination.
- Speaking of travel...we know that the global climate change effects thus far have caused an increase in the frequency and severity of storms. Shelters in vulnerable areas have already had to handle an increased volume of animals seeking safety in stormy weather. If you live where flooding, hurricane, or tornado

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## Spotlight – Dr. Jennifer Conrad, The Paw Project

With so much yet to accomplish to prevent animal cruelty on countless levels worldwide, gratitude and respect for people like Dr. Jennifer Conrad are such inadequate words for her accomplishments.



Dr. Conrad has used her time and talents to benefit both domestic and wild animals on six continents. Over two decades she has personally seen the exploitation of animals and destruction of habitat, and has worked with sea lions, rhinos, cheetahs, elephants, and other wildlife, making a huge impact on enriching and saving their lives. Among her other responsibilities, Jennifer now works with wildlife sanctuaries and also has her own company, providing humane veterinary care to animal actors.

She founded The Paw Project to rehabilitate big cats -- lions, tigers, etc. – maimed by declawing, and is currently volunteering her amazing energy, empathy, and skills to outlaw this mutilation of domestic cats. Thanks to her leadership, New York's declawing ban was finally passed – see our lead story.

It would be impossible to do justice to a life so well lived in the little space we have here, but we were able to find out a little more when she graciously took some time to answer a few questions.

*Did you always feel strongly about animals or was there a turning point that created such empathy?* I grew up steeped in human medicine. My whole family is made up of human doctors. I knew that in the future there will be lots of humans, but there might not be any tigers or elephants or rhinos. I wanted to focus on them. Plus, the benefit of being a veterinarian is that you can treat every species on the planet except one.

*Do you have any heroes?* Yes. Dr. Holly Cheever is my hero. She is an unwavering advocate for animals who started the movement from sheer will and persistence.

*In your work with wildlife, what have been your most successful programs?* I love The Paw Project ([pawproject.org](http://pawproject.org)). I love that with surgery to repair the paws of animals who suffer from declawing, we can give them back some comfort and mobility, often enough to give them a good quality of life.

*You have been to some unusual places! What were some of your biggest challenges and your biggest successes?* I think one of the biggest challenges was in Namibia dehorning rhinos in order to try to protect them from poachers. It was devastating to find out that poachers would kill them anyway because they didn't want to waste time by tracking a hornless rhino. Some of the best successes were with Save Elephant Foundation

(in Thailand and Cambodia) where we could care for former trekking elephants and give them sanctuary.

*In the late 90's NYSHA monitored the animal action in a movie and was not impressed with the system. Do you think it has improved since then?* Monitoring animals in films is a way to advocate for humane care and talk to others, especially influential actors and directors, about the plight of animals in general. I have worked with animals who really seemed to enjoy their jobs on set and the crew did everything they could to make the "talent" comfortable.

*What gives you hope?* The growing numbers of vegans in the world. I hope they are vegan for the animals, but at this point, I will take vegan for any reason as a good start.

*What frustrates you the most?* I am frustrated by indifference. The world is changing rapidly -- and often, not for the better. Many people feel that they can't make a difference by themselves. The truth is, each person's contribution is what makes a difference. Doing what is right and leading by example makes a big difference.

*What advice do you have for animal advocates to stay in the fight?* Choose your primary issue and focus. Still be part of the rest of the important issues, but put your energy into pushing your issue forward.



*How do you stay so strong in the face of adversity?* In my life, by banning declawing, I have made a lot of declawing veterinarians very angry at me, but, by banning declawing, I have not made any cats angry at me and I work for the cats.

*Anything else you would like to add?* In deciding how to treat an animal, remember, compassion has a wide berth. If we use empathy as our guide, what we can and cannot do to animals becomes crystal clear. Even though it is often said that we can declaw with compassion, we certainly can't declaw with empathy, so the choice becomes quite clear when empathy is guiding us.

*Thank you, Dr. Conrad. Your work is unique and fascinating, and you are now one of NYSHA'S heroes!*

*The Vet Is In... Continued from page 3*

damage is possible, we recommend that you have an escape plan and a travel pack ready to go when needed. The contents should include: collar, harness, leash, vaccine status, a few meals' worth of food, and any medications needed.

• If your companion has not been microchipped, NYSHA recommends that you consider doing so: in emergency situations such as extreme

weather destruction, shelters may need to move their occupants, and pets do become lost in disasters. A microchip may make all the difference between recovering your beloved companion and permanent loss.

• Since dogs tend to be more sedentary when we spend more time indoors, be sure to have an exercise regime for them and make sure their weight is controlled by a healthy diet. Holly Cheever, DVM

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