

ARFF news

for the Florida animal advocate

Winter 2009

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Promoting compassion in your community

Civic engagement — for animal advocates

A recent survey by the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship ranked Florida near the bottom of the list in civic involvement. The State of Florida ranked 48th in percentage of citizens who have attended a public meeting, and 37th in percentage of citizens who have worked with others to address a community issue. This lack of civic engagement affects everyone, including animals.

Whether you live in a city, a town or a village, you can make a large impact in the lives of animals by communicating with elected officials and attending government meetings. Your voice can shape policies that affect animals in your community,

You don't need to start from scratch. Often, laws already on the books can stop cruel practices, but they have been ignored or forgotten. Instead of putting time and energy into a new ordinance, it may be better to push for enforcement of existing ordinances, or to strengthen those ordinances to help animals.

Local ordinances in Florida can be *unusual* (in New Smyrna Beach, it is unlawful for cats to climb on cars or boats), *unique* (circuses, along with motorcycle races and fortunetellers, are not allowed in the Village of Palm Springs; in Palm Beach County, the slaughter of animals shall not be done within earshot or view of the public), *groundbreaking* (in 1989, the City of Hollywood prohibited the public exhibit of animals for entertainment or amusement), or more *common* than you might think.

Did you know that more than 125 cities in Florida have declared themselves a bird sanctuary? This common, but often overlooked, ordinance makes it a crime to trap, shoot, chase, or disturb the nests of any bird within the limits of the city. Some of these ordinances include birds *and* other wildlife (Boca Raton's ordinance includes reptiles). In several cities, squirrels are also specifically protected from harm. The ordinance may exclude from protection domestic fowl, starlings, pigeons or other birds determined to be a "nuisance," but Bird Sanctuary designations can be a powerful tool to protect birds in your community.

Please turn to page 2 to read more about local ordinances in Florida pertaining to animals, and for ideas on how you can become a good citizen—for animals.



Photo by Sandy Bauer

Animal-friendly local ordinances

Do you know what the laws are concerning animals in your community?

Common ordinances.

Animals in vehicles. Ordinances requiring animals to be securely restrained when transported in a motor vehicle, and requiring adequate ventilation or other measures to protect animals from extreme heat, are common in Florida.

Animals as prizes. Another common ordinance makes it illegal to offer a live animal as a prize as part of a contest, competition, drawing of chance, or promotional giveaway.

Pet shops. The animal ordinances in several large cities/counties in Florida include detailed regulations of pet shops selling dogs and cats, to ensure the welfare of animals. (Jacksonville's ordinance includes standards for fish tanks!) Often people who have been convicted of animal cruelty are prohibited from owning or working at a pet shop. Daytona Beach and a couple other cities bans the sale of animals at flea markets and garage sales. A few cities prohibit keeping dogs in pet shops or for other commercial purposes entirely!

Pound seizure. Many of Florida's largest counties ban the sale or donation of impounded animals to any institution or individual for the purpose of medical/scientific research.

Report of injury. In most municipalities in Florida, if you injure a dog or cat with your vehicle, it is a crime not to stop and attempt to notify the owner, a local veterinarian or law enforcement.

Spay/neuter. Many cities/counties in Florida have enacted ordinances to encourage the sterilization of dogs and cats, to reduce the number of unwanted animals killed at shelters. One popular idea targets the pocketbook by making the license fee for unsterilized animals at least double that for sterilized animals. Ordinances requiring a special permit to possess an unsterilized dog or cat are increasingly common. Monroe County's was one of the first, but in recent years Palm Beach County, Volusia County, and several cities have enacted similar ordinances.

Local laws we'd like to see statewide.

Tethering. An encouraging trend is the growing number of cities and counties in Florida that have enacted ordinances banning or restricting the tethering of dogs. The most common ordinance, which helps to ensure a humane existence for dogs in several cities in South Florida, prohibits the chaining or tethering of dogs outdoors between the hours of 10:00am and 5:00pm. In Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami, it is unlawful to tether a dog outdoors unless a guardian is outside with the dog. The tethering of dogs as a means of confinement is completely banned in Okaloosa County and in the Town of Shalimar.

Bestiality. The sexual abuse of animals is not a crime statewide (see page 4), but a few communities, such as Hendry and Lee counties, and the City of Jacksonville, have passed local ordinances making bestiality illegal.

Circuses. A surprisingly large number of cities/counties in Florida have ordinances that prohibit the use of substances or devices to induce or encourage an animal to perform by causing pain or suffering. ARFF believes that these ordinances should be interpreted to prohibit the use of bullhooks by circus elephant trainers.

Marine mammal captivity. Collier County may be the only coastal community in Florida where it is illegal to capture a dolphin in the waters offshore.

Hoarding. Pinellas County is the only community that has addressed the serious problem of animal hoarding in its code. In the county, hoarding animals, which is defined, in part, as "obsessive attempts to accumulate or maintain a collection of animals in the face of progressively deteriorating conditions," is a specific crime. Persons convicted of hoarding animals in the county may be ordered to undergo a psychological or psychiatric evaluation.

Bird shoots. Live bird shoots, involving the release of pigeons or other birds to be shot at for amusement, are banned in Sarasota and Sumter counties.

Tips on communicating with your local elected officials.

Is there an issue concerning animals in your community? Letters are usually the best way to communicate with elected officials, and ensure a response, but phone calls and e-mails may also be good ways to deliver your message.

- Try to limit your communication to a single issue. Keep your letter short; one page should be enough room to explain your issue and ask for help.
- Personalize your appeal. Talk about why you are concerned about an issue and how it affects you, your family, and your community.
- Always include your name and address. Identify yourself as a city/county resident, and (if appropriate) a resident of your council member's district.
- Encourage others to write, too. If you are able to get other residents to join you, your chances of success improve.

Need advice or have questions? Please contact ARFF at campaigns@arff.org.

2010 Legislative Session

In 2010, the Florida Legislature will consider several important animal protection issues. Please contact your state senator and state representative and ask that they take the pro-animal positions outlined below for the following bills. Use your zip code to find your legislators at www.flsenate.gov and www.myfloridahouse.gov.



Senate Bill 318 – Stopping the trade in exotic reptiles

A recent federal study by the U.S. Geological Survey determined that, “nine species of giant snakes pose high or medium risks to many regions of the country.”

The failure of Florida’s state wildlife agency to ban Burmese pythons and other exotic reptiles has resulted in the animals becoming established in the Everglades and elsewhere in South Florida. It is clear that exotic snakes are a threat to Florida’s ecosystem, and that the pet trade is at the root of the problem. Many of these animals end up doomed to live in deplorable conditions, or are abandoned after they become too expensive to care for. Senator Eleanor Sobel has filed Senate Bill 318, which would make it illegal in Florida to import, sell, breed or possess several species of large reptiles, including the Burmese python, anaconda and Nile monitor. Senate Bill 318 would “turn off the spigot, stopping the flow of dangerous reptiles into the State,” Sen. Sobel said in a press release.

You Can Help

- Please contact your state senator and state representative and urge them to support Senator Sobel’s legislation.
- Thank Senator Eleanor Sobel for introducing this important legislation. E-mail: sobel.eleanor.web@flsenate.gov.

Senate Bill 104 – Protecting animals from sexual predation

In recent years, there have been several cases of sexual abuse of animals in Florida. Shockingly, bestiality has not yet been expressly outlawed in Florida. Last legislative session, Senator Nan Rich filed a bill to make bestiality a crime. Although it passed the Florida Senate with a unanimous vote, in the Florida House it did not make it out of committee before the end of the session. Senator Rich has re-filed this important bill (Senate Bill 104) for the upcoming legislative session. With your help, this disturbing activity will be outlawed in 2010.

You Can Help

- Florida needs to join over 30 other states that take sexual abuse of animals seriously. Please contact your state senator and state representative and ask them to sign-on as co-sponsors of the bill that Senator Rich has introduced.
- Please thank Senator Nan Rich for introducing this legislation. E-mail: rich.nan.web@flsenate.gov

To win victories for animals in Tallahassee, we need your help during the legislative session to attend committee hearings and to contact committee members. Please contact ARFF to learn more.

Thank you commissioner

When ARFF’s Communications Director addressed the Martin County Commission in early November on their decision to amend zoning regulations to benefit a canned hunting operation, there was only one commissioner, Sarah Heard, who asked pertinent questions of the USDA and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission representatives. She was the only commissioner to vote “no” to the zoning change that would benefit canned hunts. She even wrote to the ARFF representative to thank him for participating.

This is in stark contrast to the way many city/county commissioners in Florida operate. ARFF has spoken at meetings when commissioners were rude and inattentive. This is why you need to show up and speak at government meetings in your community! The more animal advocates commissioners see, the more they will realize that animals have friends who vote.

You Can Help

Please thank Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard who voted in the animals’ favor. *Contact:*

Sarah Heard, Commissioner
Martin County Board of County Commissioners
2401 SE Monterey Road
Stuart, FL 34996
Phone: (772) 221-2358
E-mail the commissioner through the county website, www.martin.fl.us

10th Life cat “sanctuary” closes its doors

In October, a video appeared on YouTube showing horrible conditions inside the 10th Life cat “sanctuary” in rural Hendry County. The video showed cats in desperate need of veterinary care, among other problems. The video caught the attention of investigative reporter Amy Oshier from NBC Ch. 2 (Fort Myers), who produced an excellent two-part report looking into allegations of animal neglect at 10th Life. During the investigation, 10th Life described conducting “experiments and scientific research” using cats at the sanctuary! 10th Life also admitted that hundreds of cats had died at the sanctuary in the past few years.

In late November, we learned that 10th Life was under investigation for animal cruelty. Maury Swee, president of 10th Life, voluntarily surrendered nearly 600 cats and promised not to accept any more cats. A team of veterinarians from the University of Florida examined all of the cats and although many were suffering from serious illnesses, safe and permanent homes are being sought for as many as possible.

ARFF first received complaints about 10th Life in 2008. Since then we have been pressuring local authorities to conduct a thorough investigation of the allegations.

There are many organizations doing great work on behalf of dogs and cats in Florida, both publicly-supported shelters and private rescue groups. Unfortunately, there are also a few “rescue” organizations and “sanctuaries” that do not live up to their names. When deciding whether or not to support a rescue organization or sanctuary, don’t take the word of others. Ask if it would be possible to tour the facility. Are conditions clean? Is regular veterinary care provided? Are there enough employees or volunteers to properly care for the animals?

Leghold traps no longer for sale at Gander Mountain!

Steel-jaw leghold traps are cruel devices that have been banned in Florida since 1972. The mere possession of leghold traps where wildlife might be found is a crime in Florida. At the beginning of 2009, ARFF learned that these traps were available for purchase at Gander Mountain, a hunting, fishing, “outdoor lifestyle” superstore. We contacted the company and asked that the traps be removed from the company’s five Florida stores.



Recently, ARFF staff visited Gander Mountain stores in Palm Beach Gardens and in Ocala and found that leghold traps were no longer on store shelves. When we asked why the traps had been removed, we were told that Gander Mountain no longer stocks them because they are illegal to use in Florida. That’s exactly what we had been telling the company for months! The employee even suggested that we try a Havahart live trap instead.

ARFF never received a response from Gander Mountain to our letters, but we are happy that the illegal traps are no longer for sale in Florida. Thank you to everyone who responded to our alert in our Summer 2009 newsletter and wrote to Gander Mountain’s CEO.

ARFF’s protest against the abuse and exploitation of greyhounds, at the Sanford Orlando Kennel Club in September.



Calling all duck lovers!

Muscovy ducks thrive in many of our South Florida communities, and ARFF is contacted on almost a daily basis by people who are searching for humane population control methods. Unfortunately, there are few practical options for these birds. Based on state law, Muscovy ducks that have reached “nuisance” numbers cannot be relocated because they are not native to Florida. Therefore, the birds are often left to their own devices, killed or trapped.

However, there is good news for the great many of you who have been frustrated by the suffering inflicted on these innocent birds and the lack of options for helping! ARFF has not one, not two, but three ways for you to begin making a difference for the Muscovy ducks in your area!



You Can Help

1. Removing newly laid eggs has proven itself to be one of the most humane and effective control techniques. For those who are genuinely concerned about the treatment of these ducks, this is the single-most important thing you can do to help protect them! So, if you want to make a difference for the Muscovy ducks, ARFF is calling on YOU to collect eggs in your community. Let us know of an area near your home where Muscovies are thriving, and ARFF will provide you with instruction on how to correctly monitor nesting locations and remove newly laid eggs.

2. Many cities and counties throughout Florida have ordinances that designate them as bird sanctuaries and unless Muscovy ducks are explicitly excluded, this could mean extra protection for them! Please check the laws in your city and county and let us know what you discover. With your help ARFF will work to make sure these laws are enforced so that these defenseless birds get the protection they deserve!

3. Please contact your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representative. Urge them to ask the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Pesticide Division to revise the labeling of OvoControl G, a humane contraceptive, to include an exception for use of the drug by ARFF. If the EPA allows an exception for the controlled use of the product by ARFF, we will be able to work with cities to humanely control populations of Muscovy ducks, thereby alleviating many problematic issues faced by communities around the state of Florida. *Contact:*

Senator George LeMieux
356 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-3041
Web form: <http://lemieux.senate.gov/public/?p=EmailSenatorLeMieux>

Senator Bill Nelson
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-5274
Web form: billnelson.senate.gov/contact/index.cfm

U.S. Representative _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

*To find your U.S. Representative, go to www.house.gov and fill in your nine-digit zip code in the box at the top left corner. If you do not have internet access, please contact ARFF for help in determining who your U.S. Representative is and how to contact him or her: (954) 727-ARFF.

With so many ways to turn your frustration into action for the Muscovy ducks throughout South Florida, what are you waiting for? Contact ARFF at (954) 727-2733 or arff@arff.org to get started today!

Miss Cruelty USA

The Fur Information Council of America (FICA) continues to sponsor the Miss Florida USA and Miss Florida Teen USA pageants held at Broward College. Pageant producers Tel-Air Interests, Inc. have been unresponsive to ARFF's requests to discontinue both FICA sponsorship and the use of fur in their pageants.

While Broward College has been accommodating of ARFF's demonstrations against the Miss Florida pageants, ARFF contends that as an institution of higher learning, Broward College has the responsibility to encourage an environment based on compassion and justice. In fact, one of the core values in Broward College's Mission Statement is:

"Integrity - Fostering an environment of respect, dignity, and compassion that affirms and empowers all its members while striving for the highest ethical standards and social responsibility."



You Can Help

Please contact Broward College to voice your appreciation regarding their openness to ARFF's demonstrations on campus while politely urging that they make the responsible and compassionate choice to reconsider support of Tel-Air Interests' events until all association with fur is removed from their pageants. **Contact:**

J. David Armstrong, Jr., President
Sean Guerin, Chair, Board of Trustees

Broward College
111 East Las Olas Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
Phone: (954) 201-7401
Fax: (954)-201-7357
E-mail: President@broward.edu

"Miss Cruelty USA" joined ARFF's protest outside the Miss Florida USA pageant in July.

Our goal: reach students in every high school in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties



To learn more about ARFF's Humane Education program, please contact James Wildman at (954) 727-2733 ext. 205 or james@arff.org.

Since the beginning of the 2009 school year, ARFF's Humane Education program has given over 100 presentations reaching over 1,000 students in South Florida. ARFF's free interactive presentations are designed to empower students to think critically and encourage a sense of personal responsibility toward animals and the planet. Below is a list of schools, clubs and universities ARFF has visited. Let us know if a school attended by your child, grandchild, nephew/niece, or neighbor is not on this list!

Broward Regional Juvenile Detention Center – Florida Atlantic University (Jupiter Campus) – Seagull Alternative High School – Plantation High School – Boca Youth Activity Center – Christa McAuliffe Middle School – Coral Glades High School – Hollywood Boys & Girls Club – Hollywood Hills High School – Rubio Dario Middle School – Coconut Creek High School – Western High School – South Dade Senior High School – Miami Palmetto Senior High School – Miami Killian Senior High School – Westglade Middle School – Indian Ridge Middle School – Westpine Middle School – South Miami Senior High School – John F. Kennedy Middle School

ARFF in the media: Summer/Fall 2009

An ARFF spokesperson was featured in an investigative report on WZVN Ch. 7 (Fort Myers-Naples-Port Charlotte) and WBBH Ch. 2 (Fort Myers) about the 10th Life cat sanctuary — ARFF's concerns about the treatment of elephants in the Cole Bros. Circus were the subject of an article in the Northwest Florida Daily News — ARFF's viewpoint on the controversial release of manatees from Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park was included in a story in The Citrus County Chronicle — ARFF's Campaigns Coordinator was quoted in an article in the St. Petersburg Times about a hog hunt for children (the article was reprinted in the Lakeland Ledger) — An ARFF Coordinator was quoted in a story about alligator hunting in the Tallahassee Democrat — ARFF's protest of the Miss Florida Teen USA pageant was covered by Broward Palm Beach New Times — WTEV Ch. 47 (Jacksonville) and The St. Augustine Record covered ARFF's presentation before the city commission concerning horse-drawn carriages — Broward Palm Beach New Times reported on ARFF's efforts to convince the Broward County School Board to ban circus promotions — ARFF's protest on opening day of Florida's alligator hunt was covered by the Palm Beach Post, Sun-Sentinel and WPTV Ch. 5 (West Palm Beach) — Capitol News Service noted the "exotic pet incident list" on ARFF's website — The Palm Beach Post quoted an ARFF representative in a story about Florida's cruelty law — ARFF's Campaigns Coordinator was quoted in an article in the Palm Beach Post about the state's plans to capture and kill pythons.

Letters to the Editor

Congratulations to Carla Wilson, Ann Murray, Nick Atwood, Ana Bueno, Jim Newkirk, Janine Fuentes, Jim Brooks, Amanda Burk, Mark Klang, Don Anthony, Mimi Barnes, Susan Hargreaves, Ray Baker, Steve Renzi, Shawn Raval, Michelle Rivera, Jim Patterson, Judy Lindley, Ken Burke, Marla Gross, Darryl Bates, Laura Guttridge, Francine Meinelschmidt, Anthony Romero, Robert Bauman, Alan Freed and Vera Kramer for letters published in the Sun-Sentinel, Palm Beach Post, Vero Beach Press Journal, St. Augustine Record, Miami Herald, Orlando Sentinel, St. Petersburg Times, Tampa Bay Tribune, Broward Palm Beach New Times, Tallahassee Democrat, Sumter County Times, Florida Today, Ocala Star-Banner, Stuart News, Fort Myers News-Press, Folio Weekly, Winter Garden Times and the Northwest Florida Daily News. *Did you have a letter published in your local newspaper? Please let ARFF know!*



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memorials & accolades

In memory of Kutosha,
from Karen Lynn Maciag



VegSouthFlorida.com

YouTube.com/AnimalsFlorida

MySpace.com/animalrightsflorida

Mail to:

Animal Rights Foundation of Florida
1431 N. Federal Highway
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33304

Questions? Phone: (954) 727-ARFF E-mail: arff@arff.org

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Help ARFF put a stop to Ringling cruelty

The holiday season is a time of joy and celebration, but the season also brings one unwelcome guest: Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Please join us as we speak up for animals trapped in the circus during Ringling Bros' tour of Florida.



Please visit the events calendar at arff.org for details of additional demonstration and leafleting events (including protests in Tampa, Jacksonville and Tallahassee). Contact ARFF with questions or to RSVP.

West Palm Beach

When: Wednesday, December 23 at 5:30pm (opening night)

Where: Americraft Expo Center at the South Florida Fairgrounds, 9067 Southern Blvd., West Palm Beach
(We will meet at Gate 12, across from the Sheriff's Office Stockade)

Sarasota

When: Saturday, January 2 at 10:00am, 2:00pm and 6:00pm

Where: Robarts Arena, 3000 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota

Miami

When: Friday, January 8 at 6:00pm (opening night)

Where: American Airlines Arena - 601 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
(We will meet at the arena's north entrance)

Fort Myers

When: Saturday, January 9, 1:30pm and 5:30pm

Where: Germain Arena, 11000 Everblades Pkwy., Estero

Orlando

When: Thursday, January 14 at 6:00pm (opening night)

Where: Amway Arena - 600 West Amelia St., Orlando
(We will meet on the Amelia Street side of the arena, facing West Colonial Drive)

Lakeland

When: Saturday, January 16 at 12:30pm

Where: Lakeland Center, 701 West Lime St., Lakeland
(We will meet on the corner of Lime St. and Sikes Blvd.)

arff 
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1431 North Federal Highway
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304

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