

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(09/17/06)

CONTACT: Karel Minor
Office: 610-921-2349 ext. 10
kminor@talon.net

Humane Society of Berks County Renews Commitment to Rapid, Effective Cruelty Law Enforcement

The Humane Society of Berks County, Berks County's leader in animal welfare, announced today that it has reviewed and re-evaluated its anti-cruelty law enforcement efforts and determined them to be strong and effective. The agency undertook the internal examination in response to a recent highly publicized case in another county involving the arrest of an animal rights activist for dog theft amidst claims of unresponsiveness on the part of her local police and animal shelter. "I wanted to make sure that something like that could not happen in Berks County, so I ordered the internal review," said Humane Society executive director, Karel I. Minor. "I am extremely pleased with the results of our internal audit and will be using our findings to further strengthen our enforcement programs."

Animal cruelty laws are not always vigorously enforced by State and local police because of a focus on human directed crimes. Pennsylvania law allows appointed Humane Society Police Officers to enforce the State's animal cruelty statutes. These officers must be associated with an animal welfare agency, receive extensive training at the agency's expense, and adhere to all rules of criminal investigative procedure. Although these officers serve to enforce State law; State, County, and Local government provides no financial support for this enforcement.

The Humane Society of Berks County has four sworn Humane Society Police Officers, as well as one awaiting court appointment, making it the largest cruelty law enforcement agency within Berks County. These officers, with the support of officers from other agencies authorized to work in Berks County, makes Berks County among the most

extensively enforced counties in Pennsylvania in the area of animal cruelty. “The fact that we have Humane Society Police Officers on-duty or on-call 24 hours a day means that no resident of Berks County is ever more than a phone call away from getting swift, effective animal cruelty law enforcement,” says Minor.

In 2006, the Humane Society of Berks County undertook a concerted effort to enhance its law enforcement capabilities. In addition to adding more sworn officers, it increased its dedicated on-duty cruelty and animal control staffing to seven days a week, created possibly the first on-line animal cruelty reporting program in the State, took on the responsibility of enforcing animal bite and rabies quarantine for Berks County, and became the lead agency for the Berks County Animal Response Team (Berks CART).

There were also improvements to its lost and found and animal control programs, the creation of Ani-Meals on Wheels, the expansion of its nationally recognized PetNet program, and the expansion of low-cost preventative veterinary care services. These enhancements mean that animals in Berks County are better protected than ever before. Because of the link between animal cruelty and domestic violence and drug abuse, as well as injuries due to dog bites and their aftermath, these enhancements also mean that the people of Berks County are better protected. “We are committed to making people and animals safe in our County and responding rapidly and effectively when our help is needed,” says Minor. “That’s why we are here and that’s what we intend to do.”

The Humane Society of Berks County serves all of Berks County and surrounding communities, sheltering nearly 7,000 animals each year. It is a private, non-profit organization funded through donations and service fees. In addition to enforcing Pennsylvania’s animal cruelty laws, the Humane Society offers adoption services, spay and neuter services, humane education, pet behavioral counseling, and helps stray, injured and mistreated animals. The Humane Society of Berks County is located at 1801 N. 11th Street, Reading. More information is available at www.berkshumane.org.

###