

Business

American Humane growing in stature, reach

By Bill DiPaolo
Special to the Daily News

Boosting animal safety in international zoos from Atlanta to Abu Dhabi, providing emergency animal rescue in The Bahamas and setting quality standards for the eggs you buy in local supermarkets are among the many missions for American Humane.

"We celebrate the human/animal bond. Animals make us better people," said Robin R. Ganzert, president and chief executive officer of the worldwide organization that moved its southern branch office from Bradley Place to Royal Palm Way on Dec. 1.

The nonprofit started in 1877 with an aim to protect American farm animals. Almost a century and a half later, American Humane has a \$52 million annual budget — all from donations, corporations and foundations — and 100 full-time employees.

Improving animal safety internationally is the organization's current emphasis, said Chairman of the Board John Payne.

It set up relief in The Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian. Ganzert recently returned from trips to promote American Humane standards in Abu Dhabi, Spain and the Canary Islands. She was in Africa supporting ecotourism on reservations in Rwanda.

"We do not want to close these places. We want to make them more humane places for animals," said Payne, who himself has two pet Yorkie poos, Jersey and Maggie.

Many Palm Beachers know the organization for its 50-foot Red Star Rescue vehicle that provides emergency services to help animals caught in floods, wildfires, hurricanes and other emergencies.

American Humane has seven of the vehicles around the country, one of them stored in West Palm Beach. The vehicles sleep up to four people and have animal surgery equipment.

The organization also provides animal companions to wounded soldiers through veteran's programs. In Hollywood, American Humane determines animal safety standards on movie sets for performing dogs, cats, lions, elephants and other animals.

Legendary actor Henry Fonda sparked the Tinseltown connection in 1940. A horse died during a scene where a stagecoach tumbled off a cliff during the filming of "Jessie James." Upset, Fonda worked with American Humane members to establish safety standards.

Productions that meet American Humane's requirements earn the right to show a "No Animals Were Harmed" during the closing credits. About nine out of 10 animals in Hollywood movies are from rescue shelters, said Ganzert.

"We work closely with Disney. Steven Spielberg is a big fan," she said.

Volunteering veterinarians determine the safety standards for the Hollywood movie sets. They also set the standards for farms with pigs, cattle, chicken and other livestock.



Robin Ganzert, president and chief executive officer of American Humane, with her dogs Daisy and Mr. Darcy, in the organization's new offices located at 251 Royal Palm Way. [DAMON HIGGINS/PALMBEACHDAILYNEWS.COM]

About 15,000 farms and ranches nationwide meet the American Humane standards for water and air quality, roaming space, lighting and humane slaughtering.

Consumers can find American Humane labels on the food packaging, such as free range and cage free eggs. Free range hens are allowed out of doors. Cage-free hens are let outside their cages but kept indoors.

Safety standards for dog breeding and fish farming are next, said Ganzert.

"Fish feel pain. Our goal is for them to live in a humane environment," said Ganzert, who lives in West Palm Beach with her dogs, Mr. Darcy and Daisy.



American Humane Association workers remove two dogs from a home flooded by cresting waters from Hurricane Florence. The dogs were found floating on sofa cushions. [FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICAN HUMANE]

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