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Louisiana attorney general launches HSUS investigation

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Louisiana Attorney General Charles Foti Jr. has opened an inquiry into allegations involving funds raised for reuniting pets and their owners by the Humane Society of the United States.

The attorney general announced in late March that it had asked the HSUS for an accounting of all funds the humane organization had raised for pet rescue and reunion with pet owners in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Numerous pet owners filed complaints with the attorney general about problems finding their pets, according to Foti's office. Some owners claim that persons currently caring for their displaced pets are refusing to reunite the pet with the proper owners.


"Once again we will be on the lookout to make sure that those who seek to raise money for hurricane victims in our state, do exactly what they claim to do when soliciting funds," Foti stated. "While I commend the work of the many wonderful charitable organizations that have come forward to help us in our time of need, I also want people to know that they cannot take advantage of our situation in any way."

Wayne Pacelle, HSUS president and CEO, noted that the state of Louisiana originally set Oct. 15, 2005, as the deadline for all reunions to occur. The HSUS pushed the state to extend the deadline by 30 days, and then asked shelters across the country that had opened their doors to the animal victims of Katrina to voluntarily agree not to adopt out animals until Dec. 15.

Pacelle underscored the efforts of the HSUS and other groups to continue their rescue, relief, and reunion work after state officials forced the closure of the temporary animal sheltering facility at Lamar Dixon Center in Gonzales on Oct. 10.

"Government officials set a strict limit on the number of animals that could be housed and brought the central sheltering operation in Louisiana to an end in October over our objections, since we wanted to continue to operate," Pacelle said. "Moving animals to shelters across the country made it possible to rescue more animals whose lives were in immediate danger.


"Working with local animal shelters and humane societies across the country, HSUS and the other groups arranged airlifts for the animals, documented and catalogued those animals as best we could, and worked to secure as many reunions as possible under difficult circumstances."


The HSUS spent or pledged approximately \$25 million in the Gulf Coast states, Pacelle added. 

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