

Disaster Strikes: Look to the Red Star

“The pain and suffering may be sanctioned in popular conception of the infernal regions but have no proper place here on earth. Conditions are not yet perfect. Much remains to be done. Society has purged itself of a great deal of dross. It is now grasping at better conditions.”

In 1923, William O. Stillman, president of the American Humane Association from 1905 to 1924, wrote these words. Today, in 2002, society has indeed become more humane, but, just as in 1923, conditions are still not perfect and much remains to be accomplished. This statement holds true for all of American Humane’s initiatives, and Red Star Emergency Services is no exception.

The Beginning of Red Star

American Red Star Animal Relief began because President Stillman and other dignitaries of the humane movement in the early 20th century understood that the suffering of animals on the battlefield was no more tolerable than that of a soldier.

In 1914, a Geneva treaty called the International Red Star Alliance was instated. The purpose of the alliance was to bring about international cooperation on behalf of sick or wounded war animals, while securing the neutralization of those engaged in such work.

On June 9, 1915, the Swiss minister sent a letter to President Stillman asking the American

Humane Association to form an international organization to protect animals used in the war. Then, on May 22, 1916, U.S. Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, officially requested American Humane “undertake the work of doing for army animals what the American Red Cross is doing for soldiers.”

And so began American Red Star Animal Relief. As a result of these two requests, President Stillman helped organize 125 branches of the Red Star across the United States and raised money for supplies and ambulances for U.S. Army horses. Soon after, at its 1917 annual conference, the Red Star was asked to broaden its efforts. Major Griffen of the U.S. Army Veterinarian Corps had only one veterinarian and 16 assistants for more than 400 horses. He asked American Humane and the Red Star to help recruit more veterinarians and to purchase supplies for them to treat the horses.



This symbol marked the beginning of American Humane’s animal relief efforts.



War takes its toll on all creatures. Here, a horse, Red Star dog, and soldier are wounded in combat.



An advertisement in the National Humane Review calls for volunteers for Red Star.

An advertisement in the 1917 *National Humane Review* called for Red Star workers who were willing to “do their bit” on behalf of Army animal relief, without salary and, as far as possible, assuming their own expenses. Humanitarians nationwide volunteered to help the effort, despite the meager offerings. President Stillman reported in another 1917 issue of the *National Humane Review* that the American Red Star Animal Relief propaganda was making constant headway. He wrote, “If persons believe in the Red Cross work for soldiers, they cannot consistently refuse to believe in Red Star work for Army horses.”



An early American Red Star ambulance.

Before the end of 1917, Red Star had won the support of a motion picture celebrity. Mary Pickford found “time and inspiration” to be associated with the work of the Red Star. In an article in the *National Humane Review*, Pickford declared, “I am proud to be associated with this wonderful humanitarian enterprise,” thus bringing national attention to the plight of Red Star to save military dogs and horses.

Issues After the War

After the war, the Red Star focused mainly on domestic issues, such as starvation among livestock, and humane education, distributing materials to school children. The Red Star also began to help animal victims of disasters throughout the country.

During the thin years of the 1930s, the Red Star greatly diminished in size and prominence. But then the massive flood of 1937 occurred, and American Humane launched an effort to revive the Red Star. It again bolstered the vision of President Stillman that “the Red Star be large enough to cope with any disaster, calling for a fund large enough for that purpose.”

The Red Star has evolved throughout the more than 80 years of its existence, and American Humane has never lost the understanding of its spirit. Even withstanding the program’s name change to the Emergency Animal Relief (EAR) program, American Humane has stayed active in helping animals in disasters. Yet neither Red Star nor EAR has reached the level of Dr. Stillman’s intent.

Rebirth of Red Star

In this year of American Humane’s 125th anniversary, the organization has once again revived the name “Red Star.” This revival shows the renewed and continued commitment American Humane has to helping animals and



MISS MARY PICKFORD WITH TEDDY, THE MOST CELEBRATED DOG IN MOTION PICTURES
BOTH ARE ENTHUSIASTIC FOR THE RED STAR (See page 225)

Mary Pickford brings national attention to Red Star's efforts.

their families affected by disasters. Each year, disasters prove the continued need for our service, as well as the ongoing need for dollars and manpower. American Humane remains committed to making President Stillman's vision a reality, but we have a long way to go.

National Responders. This year, the Red Star has begun the long road to building a regional plan. The program has created a network of National Responders – trained individuals throughout the country who are ready to go at a moment's notice. These Responders are animal control officers, humane welfare professionals, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians who have received specialized training to rescue animals without posing further risk to the animals or themselves. Their training involves hands-on animal rescues in common disaster scenarios, such as swift water, high- to low-angle, and equine rescues. More advanced training deals with helicopter and night operation rescues.

Through the efforts of the National Responders, American Humane has helped at the scene of numerous disasters over the years, including hurricanes Hugo, Andrew, Fran, and

Floyd; earthquakes in San Francisco and Los Angeles; major floods in the Northwest, the Midwest, Georgia, Texas, Kentucky, and North Dakota; tornadoes in numerous states; summer wildfires; winter blizzards; and even the aftermath of September 11. As the Responders become numerous and better trained, these volunteers will become the backbone and potential directors that will build the Responder network within their regions.

Special fund. Another accomplishment this year is the establishment of the Red Star Emergency Fund – a steppingstone to President Stillman's vision of being able to respond to a disaster of any size. This specific fund will support National Responder teams or provide direct relief to affected humane organizations and disaster victims.

Modern times, modern needs. For the Red Star to effectively respond to the needs of animals and humane organizations, National



National Responders save a horse caught in a violent current.

Responders need appropriate tools and equipment. In 1917, the Red Star purchased \$60,000 of equipment for General Pershing's Army in France. In 2002, the Red Star spends several thousands of dollars annually for



National Responders rescue one of the many displaced pets after the tragedy in New York City on September 11.

personal safety equipment and machines to be used during disasters.

The flagship of this effort is American Humane's Animal Planet Rescue truck, a massive rescue rig that features all the resources needed for animal rescue work, including a mobile veterinary clinic; specialized animal rescue equipment; rescue boats; animal feed; and cages, kennels, and corrals to house and rescue animals.

When not responding to a disaster, the truck is a touring educational center that informs communities about how to prepare for and handle animals during disasters. At each stop on the truck's educational tour, the public is welcomed into Animal Planet Expo, a 15,000-square-foot interactive experience in which

people can tour the one-of-a-kind 82-foot rig, learn about the services of local animal groups, and participate in animal trivia games for prizes.

Essential training. Equipment and personnel do not get the job done without training. During Hurricane Andrew in 1992, it was evident that people responding to animal needs did not have enough training to handle animals or perform technical rescue. American Humane began providing this training, which is continuously enhanced with new curricula and necessary revisions. The Red Star National Responders are able to participate in numerous tracks of technical trainings offered several times a year throughout the country.

Ready for Tomorrow's Disasters

Every year new disasters challenge communities throughout the United States and around the world. The government and local officials are again beginning to recognize the need for organized and well-trained operations for animals. Based on our continued commitment to animal welfare, the Red Star will again be asked to provide this much needed support and be a guiding light in the most dire times. ☸



When disaster strikes, American Humane comes to the scene in the Animal Planet Rescue Truck.



Reviving the past – American Humane returns in 2002 to the original Red Star name.