Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2005

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

We are writing to you today to urge you to designate an individual to coordinate animal rescue efforts in the Gulf Coast region.

The incredible destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina has left in its wake loss of life and property damage America has yet to fully grasp. One of the many untold stories following the storm is the impact of Katrina on tens of thousands of stranded and abandoned animals and the public health danger they could pose.

Animal welfare teams from across the country have rescued thousands of pets throughout the Gulf Coast region, but thousands more remain stranded. Assistance is urgently needed to move rescued animals from overwhelmed temporary shelters to locations out of state, while treating these animals to avoid the spread of disease and potential harm to people in these areas. Only a federal government-led coordinated response can properly ensure that these efforts are successful.

We urge you to appoint a high-level Dept. of Homeland Security individual to oversee the collection and transport of abandoned animals to appropriate shelters across the country. This official should coordinate federal, state and local government response teams, as well as private organizations. Providing this leadership will be necessary for an organized effort to protect pets and the public health alike.

Our request has the strong support of many animal welfare groups that have been working to rescue animals affected by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, including The Humane Society of the United States, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, American Veterinary Medical Association, American Humane Association, Animal Welfare Institute, Doris Day Animal League, and United Animal Nations.

Congress stands ready to assist you with this request. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

All the best,

Mike Simmons

Michael T. McCaul

Diane E. Watson

Neil Abercrombie

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