

July 2022

The ACO Voice

A Monthly Magazine from the Animal Control & Care Academy
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Early Animal Care Vehicles



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Early Animal Care Vehicles

By John Mays

While we have featured this article previously (May of 2018), we have received requests from readers to offer the article again. The following articles, both from the same author, are referenced as follows:

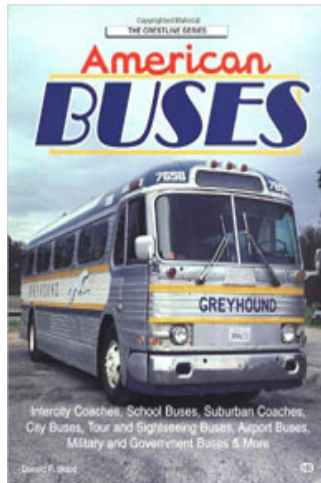
Early Animal Care Trucks - Appeared in the November/December 1983 issue of *Community Animal Control Magazine*.

Picking Up Pups: 1900 - 1950 - Appeared in the September/October 1998 issue of *Special Interest Autos Magazine*.

The author of both articles, Donald Frank Wood, was a San Francisco State University professor and prolific author on transportation issues. Professor Wood, who died in 2003, joined the San Francisco State faculty as a Professor of Transportation Economics at the College of

Business. In addition to teaching, he wrote several widely used textbooks on transportation and logistics. Along with several dozen academic papers, Professor Wood was the author of the transportation economics and logistics sections of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

He also wrote more than 25 historical and pictorial books, primarily about trucks. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, he wrote *New York City Fire Trucks*, a chronological history of the Fire Department of New York equipment, particularly those units used and lost at the World Trade Center. He was active in professional transportation organizations, including the American Truck Historical Society in Kansas City, Missouri.



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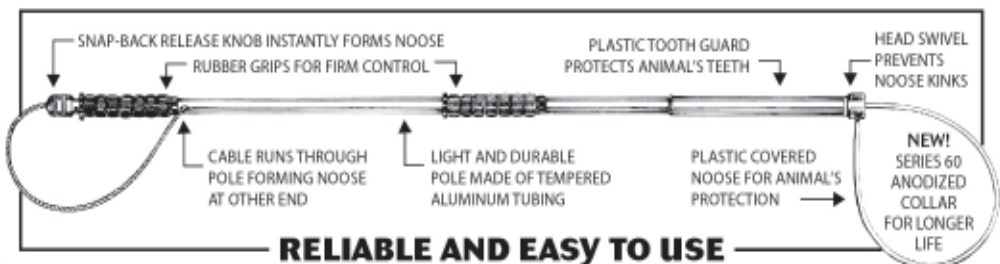
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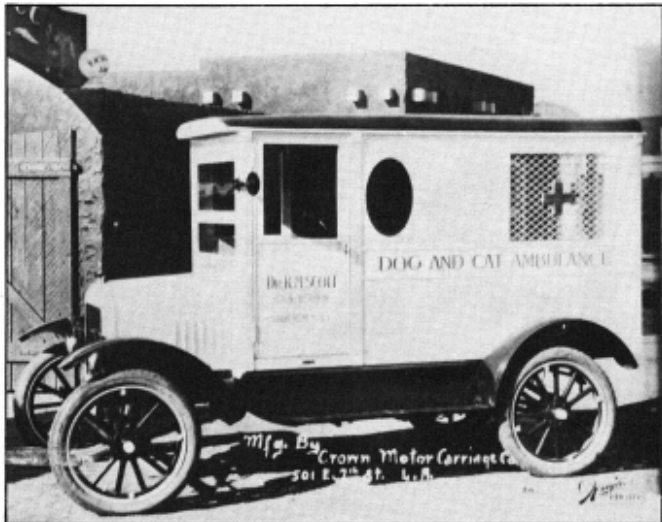
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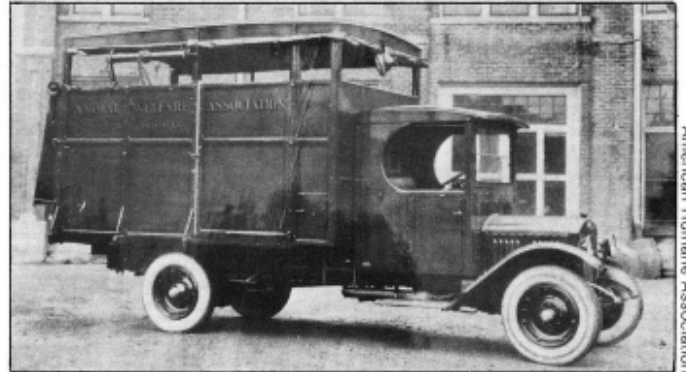
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This Model-T Ford from about 1920 was used by a veterinarian in Southern California.



An early horse ambulance; probably an electric. Note bell behind front bumper.



This is a horse ambulance, used in Detroit in the mid-1920's. Overhead, just below the roof, is equipment for lifting a horse. A floodlight hangs just below the front center of the roof. Truck is probably a GMC.

Early Animal Care Trucks

by Donald F. Wood

A number of individuals and organizations have been concerned for many years with the care of injured animals and with the collection of stray animals. The motor truck was often used to help in this work; and a number of truck bodies were tailored to perform specific tasks.

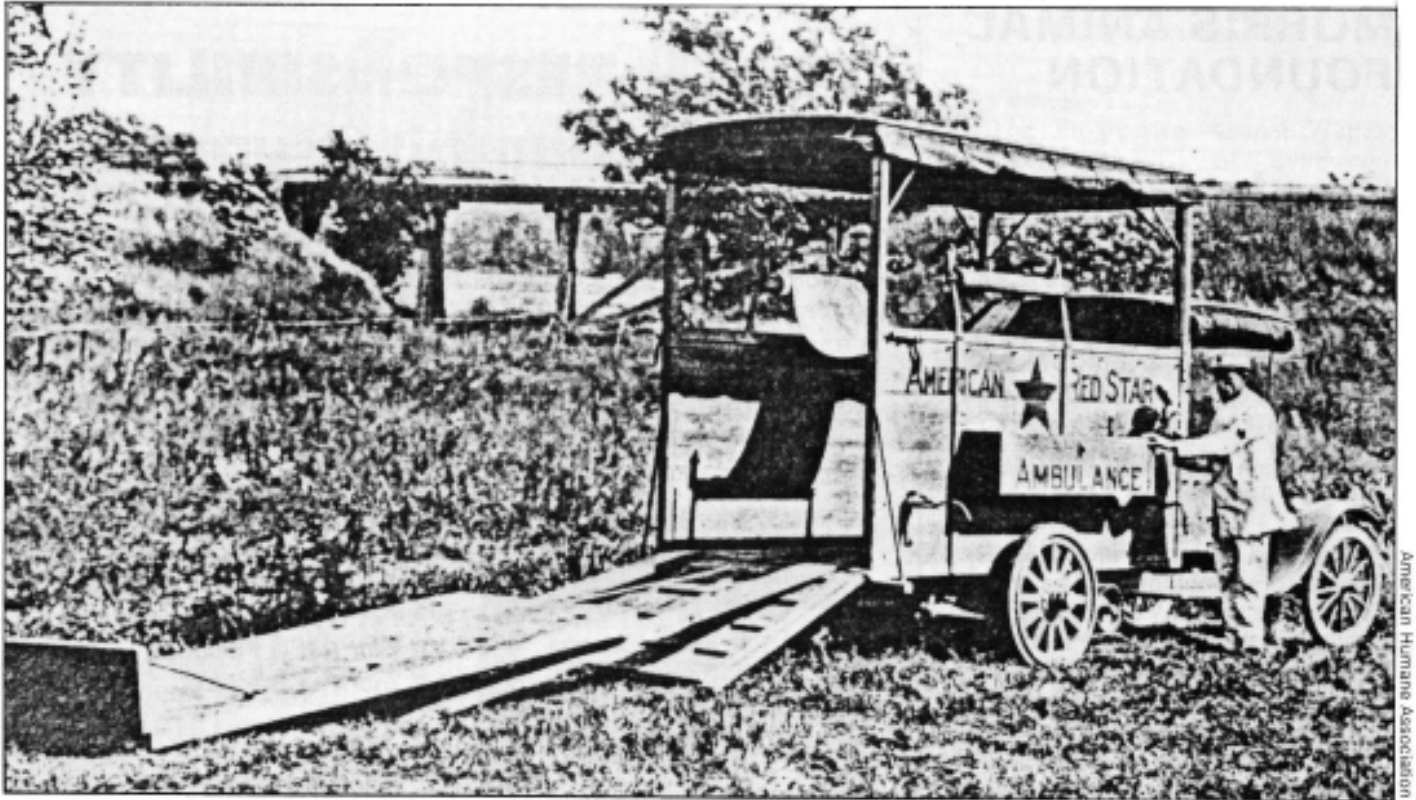
Two types of early truck bodies evolved: one for carrying horses; the other, for small animals. Horse-carrying bodies (some developed for use by the Red Star Animal Relief on the battlefields of World War I) usually had two unique features. The first was a mattress-like pad which somehow would be placed under the fallen horse and

Donald F. Wood is a Professor of Transportation at San Francisco State University, and he writes about old trucks.

a winch at the front of the truck's body would then pull the pad and horse up a ramp at the truck's rear, into the truck's bed. The second feature was one or more slings, hung from the truck's roof, which would be slung under the horse's belly and used to lift it to and support it in a standing position. Some horse-rescue trucks also had an A-frame with bottom legs attached to truck's lower rear corners. When the truck was in a parked position in front of the fallen horse, the top of the A-frame would be extended over the horse and a sling placed under the horse. A cable would be slung through the A-frame and a winch at the front of the truck bed would be used to lift the fallen horse. Then, by moving the top of the A-frame close to the truck, the horse could be assisted in its walk up the ramp into the truck.

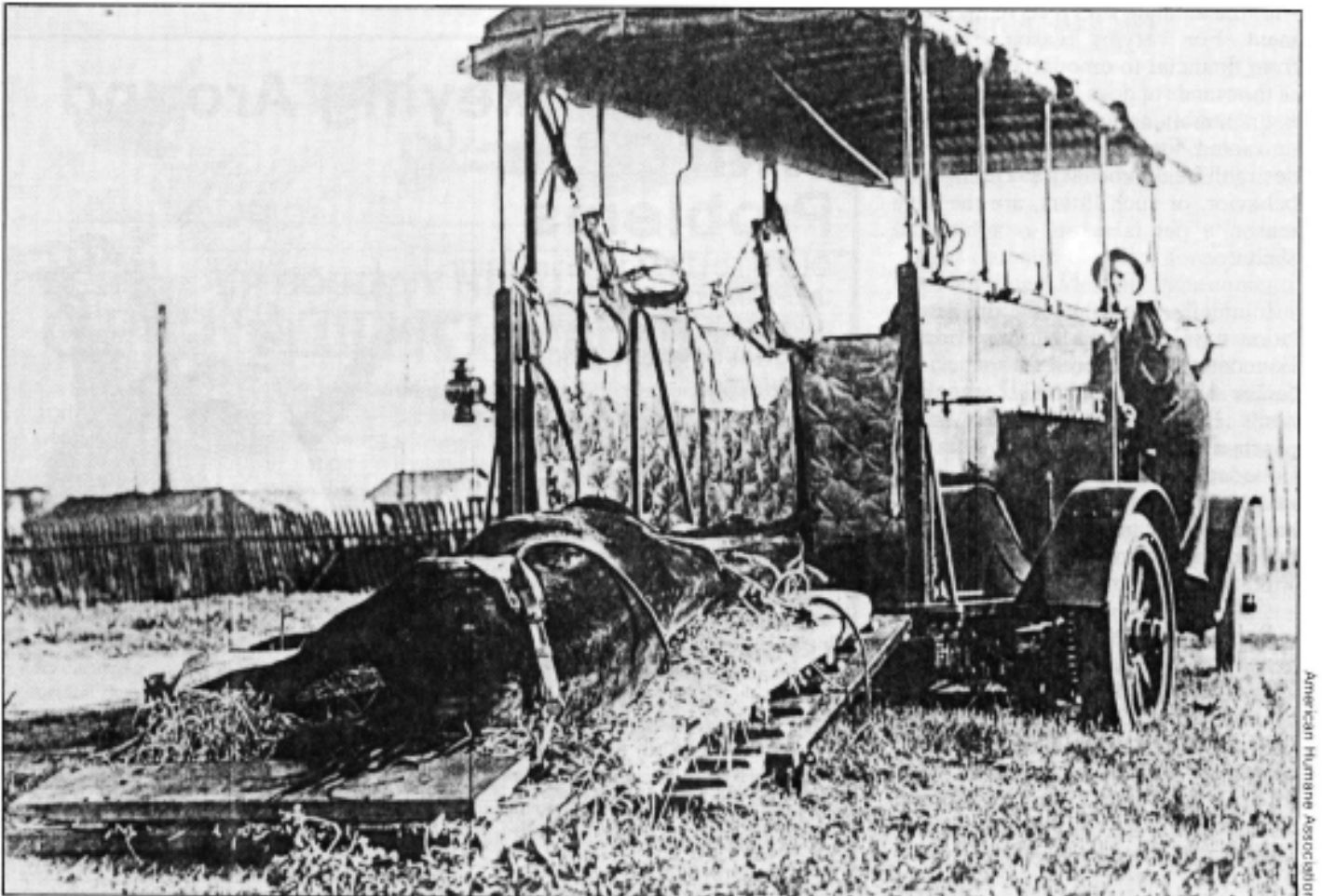


This is a horse ambulance large enough to carry four horses. It was one of three similar horse ambulances used in the Boston area in 1925. It is mounted on a Garford chassis.

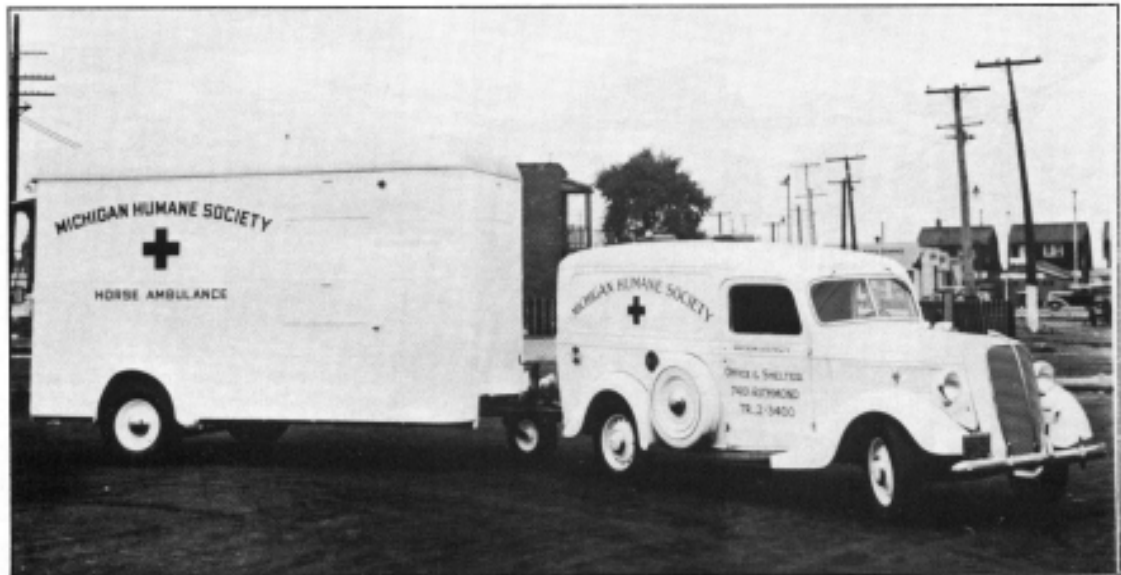


American Humane Association

Above and Below: The American Red Star Animal Relief program was an offshoot of the American Humane Association during World War I. These two pictures, and the one on the cover, show a horse ambulance body mounted on a Ford chassis, being used in France. The injured horse could be placed aboard the bed and pulled aboard. Slings attached to the roof would help support the animal.



American Humane Association



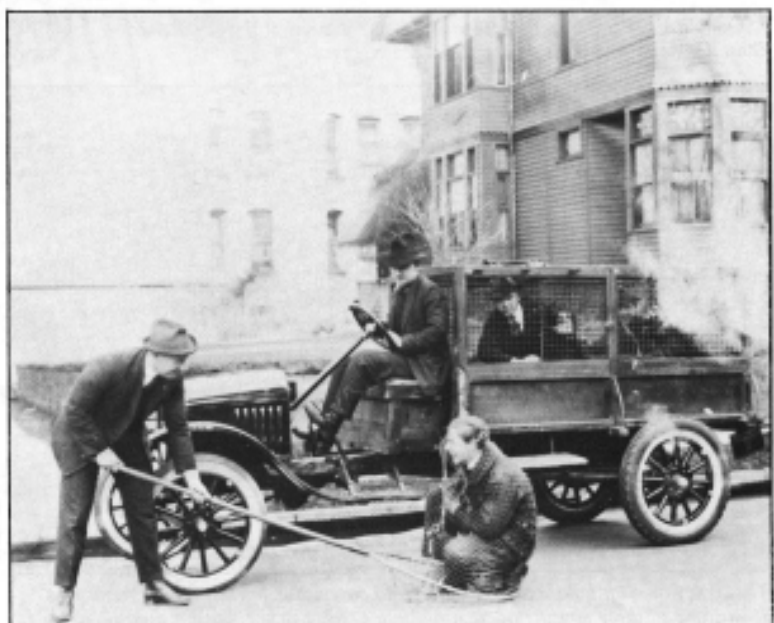
American Humane Association

Above and Below: This mid-30's Ford panel truck with three-wheel trailer was used in Detroit as a horse ambulance. A cable and winch could be used to pull the mattress up the ramp.



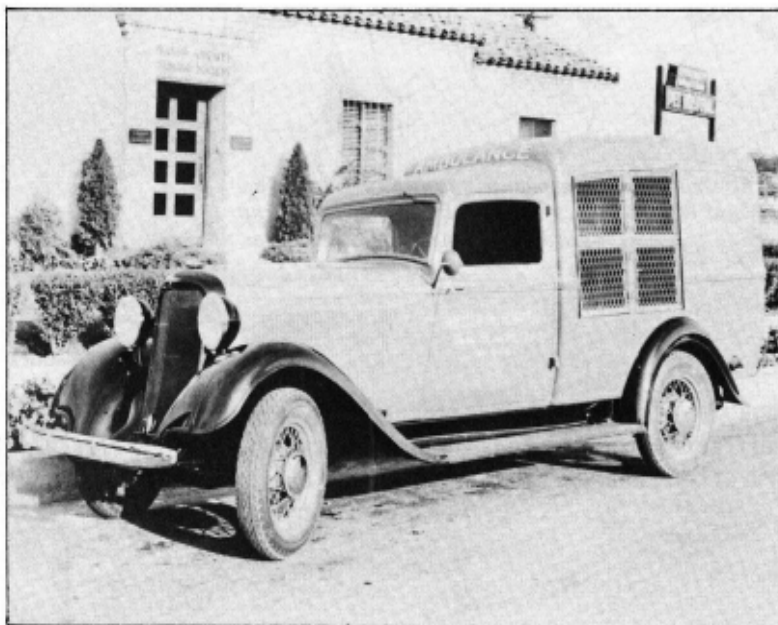
American Humane Association

This is a common "dog catcher's" body; little more than a wire mesh pen or two mounted on a flat truck body. Truck is a Model-T Ford from the early 1920's.



Oregon Historical Society

This mid-30's Dodge, used in San Rafael, California, consisted of a conventional panel body with screen mesh doors built into the sides.



American Humane Association

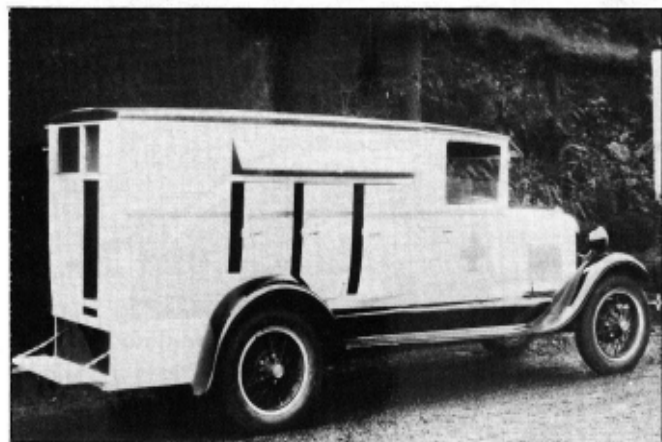
Vehicles for carrying small animals were used mainly for collecting strays. They contained numerous small cages, separated by wire mesh screen. Other compartments were for equipment needed to catch various small animals. Many of these vehicles came equipped with a lethal chamber, which would be enclosed inside regular-appearing doors at the truck's rear. Inside these regular doors would be a heavier, sealed door (a truck body-building magazine in 1932 recommended this door be mounted with icebox-type hardware). The chamber would be lined with metal and would have a removable tray at the bottom. The vehicle's exhaust system was altered so that the exhaust pipe had a "Y" connection; exhaust gases could be fed through the chamber, as needed.

Today, horse ambulances have all but disappeared although conventional horse-carrying vans and trailers remain. Small animal-collecting bodies are still widely used; the main changes have been substitution of fiberglass for more traditional materials, the elimination of lethal chambers, and the widespread use of the smaller, compact-size trucks.



American Humane Association

The body on this mid-30's Ford has eight compartments on this side alone for carrying small animals.



American Humane Association

This early 30's Ford has several side compartments for small animals. Upper compartment has a single, narrow door which is vented so it may contain cages for cats.



American Humane Association

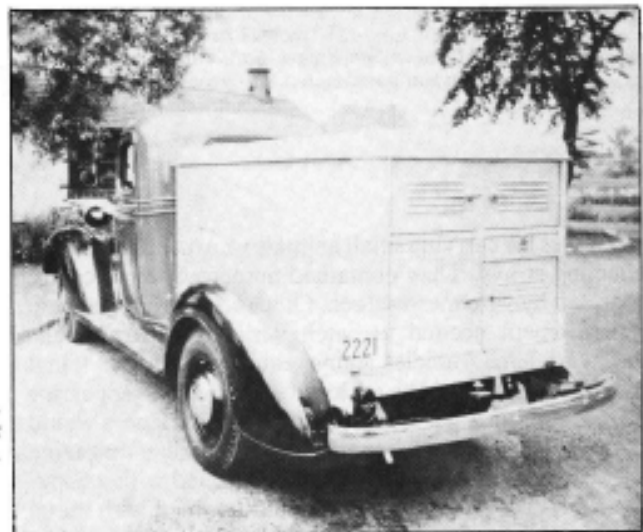
A Plymouth sedan delivery from the late 1930's, with a uniformed animal control officer. Vehicles such as these usually had separate wire mesh cages inside.

This small animal ambulance was used in Cuba, before World War II. Vehicle is an American Bantam with an extra compartment added to the rear.

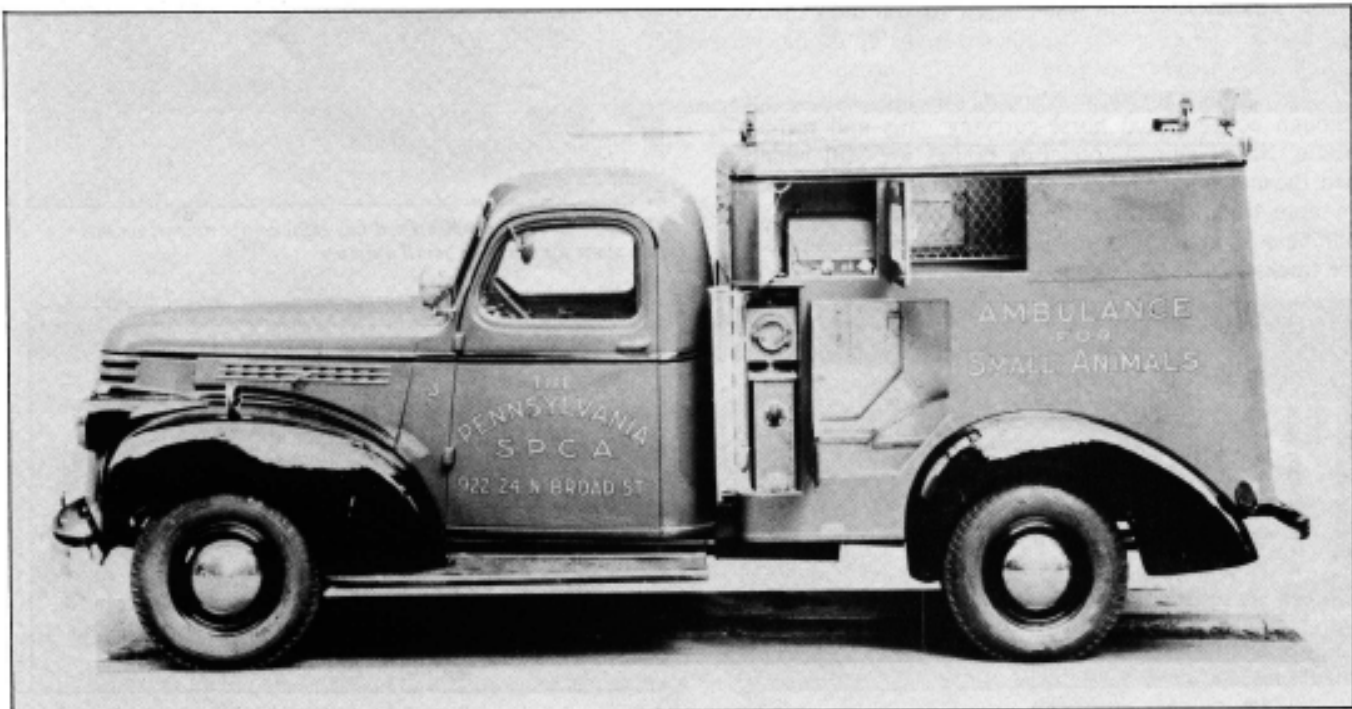


American Humane Association

Small animal body mounted on a 1940 Chevrolet chassis. Lower left compartment has no vent; it may be the "lethal" chamber.

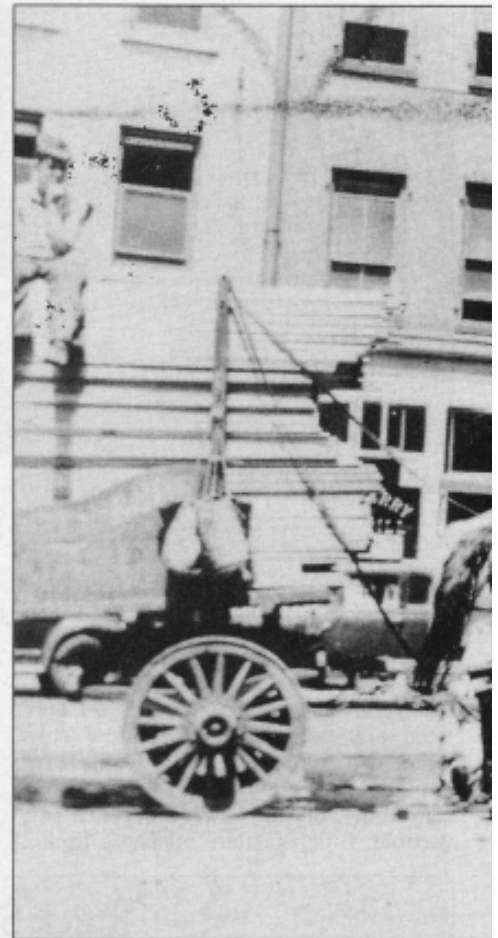
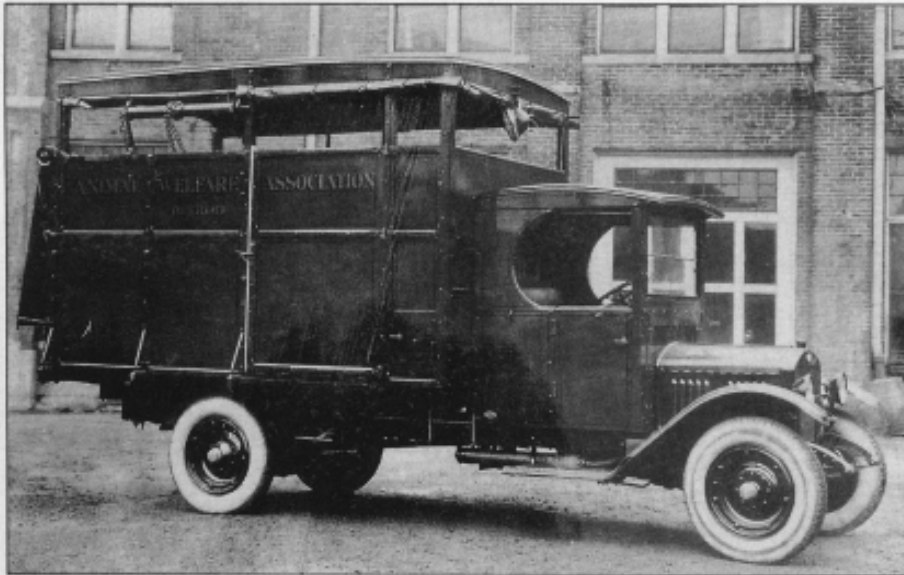


American Humane Association



American Humane Association

This 1941 body had a rack for holding a ladder. It contained six compartments for holding live animals, a lethal chamber, and six other compartments for holding rescue equipment.



Picking Up Pups

1900-1950

by Donald F. Wood

A number of organizations exist to provide care for injured and stray animals. In the writer's youth, small trucks were driven by what we called "dogcatchers," mainly to round up stray dogs. Now, many years later, the writer lives in Marin County, California, where the humane society seems to spend much of its time dealing with raccoons and deer at odds with an expanding urban setting.

When World War I began, the major armies still used horses for much of their cargo transport, and there was great concern that these animals were being injured as a result of military action. (In a recent movie about President Truman, in a World War I scene Truman, as an artillery commander, delayed firing at an enemy position until the Germans had walked their horses away from Truman's target.) Animal welfare groups donated funds for an animal ambulance corps that would help remove injured horses to the rear.

In the United States, animal welfare organizations were concerned with horses (used in some urban settings until the early 1960s) as well as small pets. Obviously, horse ambulances were much larger, and they needed a device to assist in loading the injured horse, such as a flat litter that would be winched inside the trailer where the horse would have a wide sling placed

under its belly and then be lifted and held in a standing position. Other horse ambulances had an A-frame with bottom legs at the truck body's rear corners. The truck would be spotted in front of the fallen horse, a sling placed below the horse and the A-frame would be lifted, raising the horse which, with

varying amounts of assistance, would "walk" into the trailer where it would be kept slung in an upright position.

An article in a 1931 issue of *Autobody Trimmer and Painter* advised body shops to market pet ambulances to local veterinarians, and part of their sales pitch would be that the pet ambulance is a



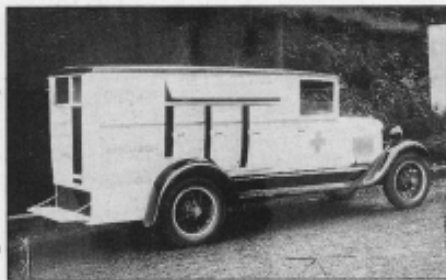
Crown Coach Corp.

Top left: Mid-twenties horse ambulance on a GMC chassis, used by the Animal Welfare Association of Detroit. **Above:** A veterinarian in Universal City, California, used this "Dog and Cat Ambulance." The body was built and installed by Crown.



Above: This Ford TT was used in cities for giving work horses an opportunity to drink. Ice water was carried to be given to the teamsters, and act as an incentive for them to stop to let their teams drink. Holes in tires were to increase cushioning effect. **Below:** This truck was used by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals during World War I, and is shown at a veterinary hospital in France in 1916.

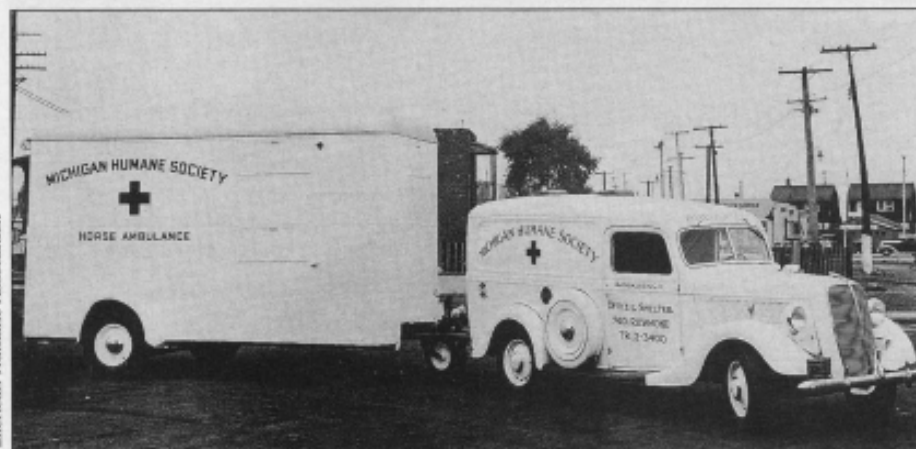
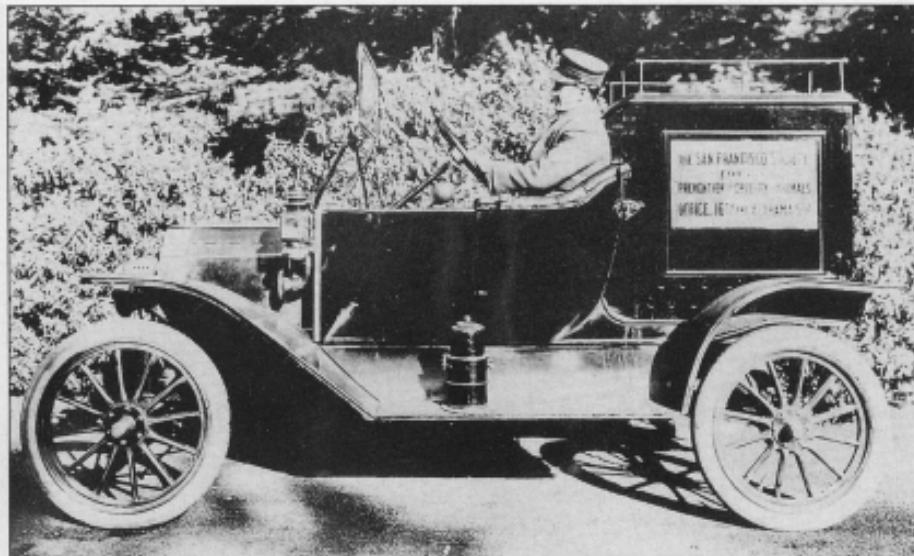




Above: The Oregon Humane Society used this 1929-31 Ford AA. Smaller compartments at top are probably for cats. **Right:** An early Ford T, operated in San Francisco.

Below: 1937 Ford panel with a trailer used for carrying injured horses, used in Michigan. Note ramp for loading horse.

Bottom: This 1925 Garford was one of three similar horse ambulances operated in Boston.

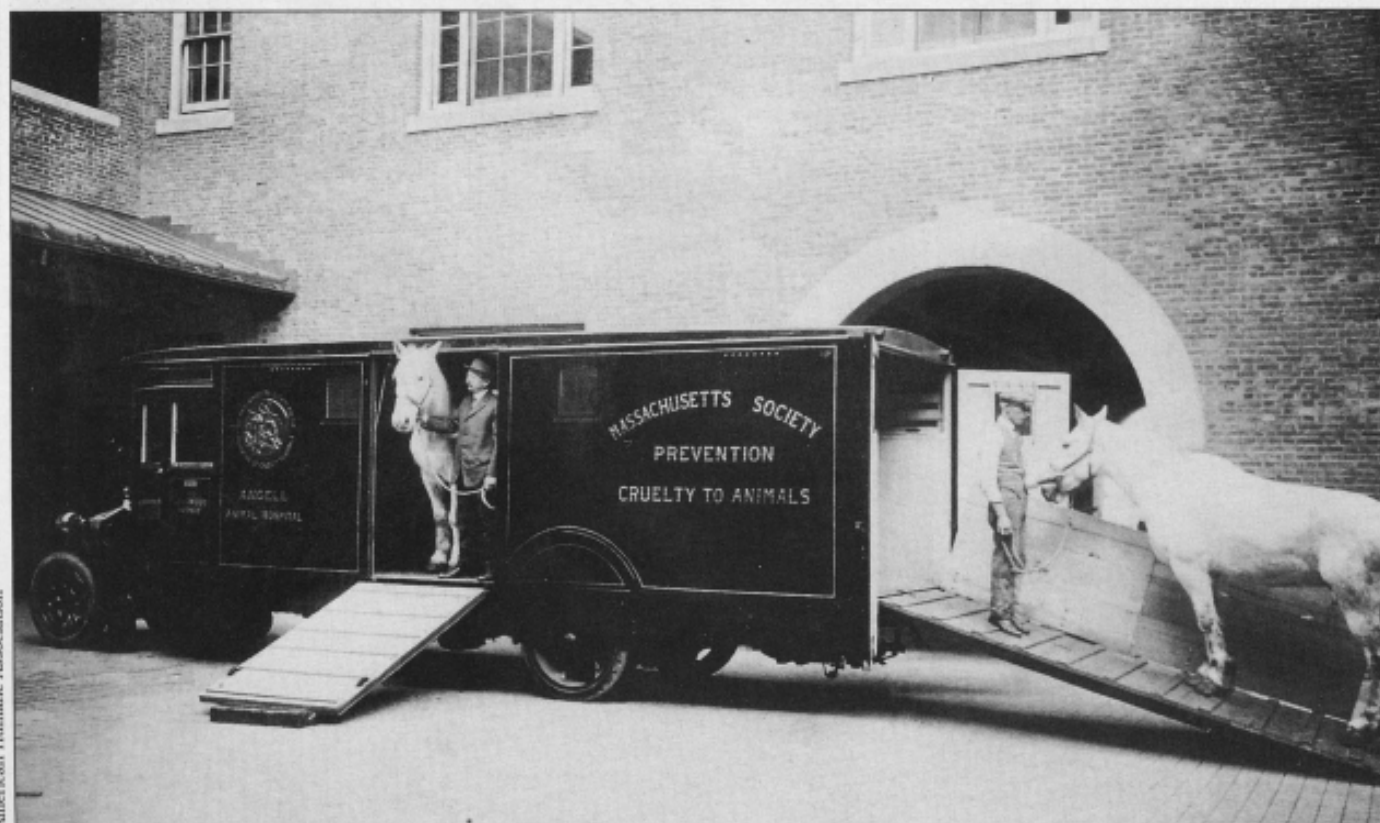


Picking Up Pups

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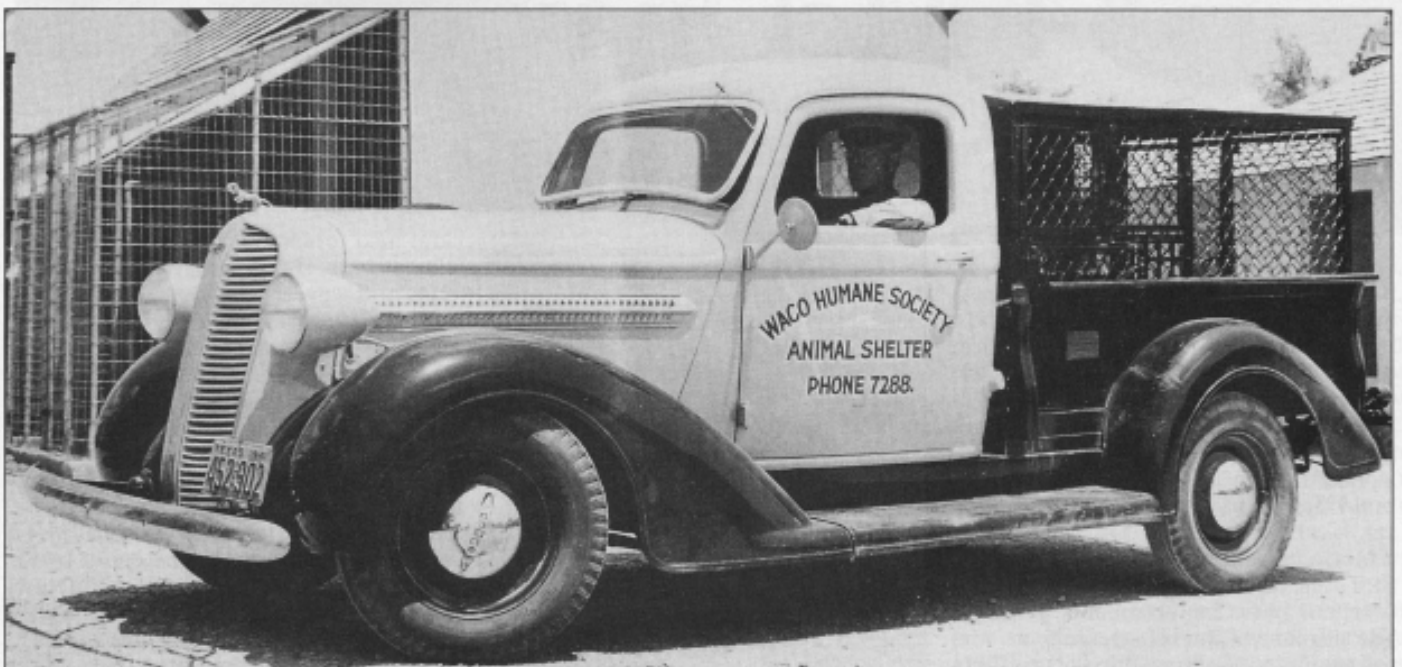
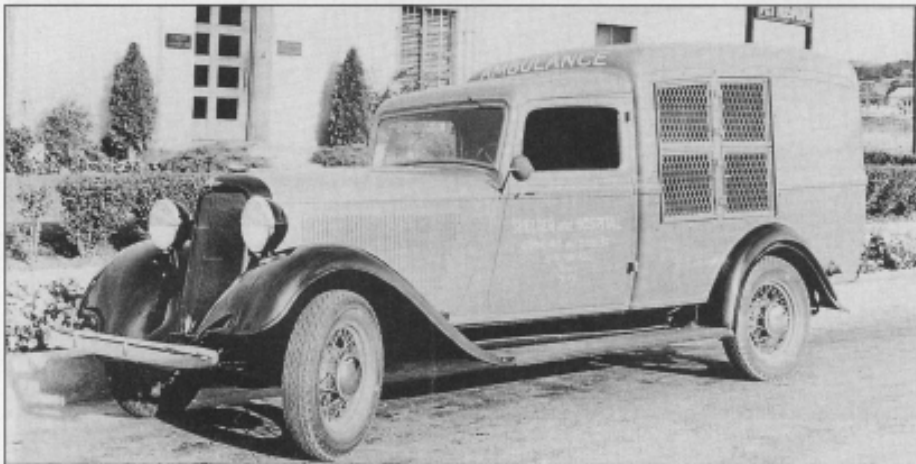
traveling advertisement for the veterinarian. "And what more effective advertising could he use than an ambulance specially constructed for the purpose of calling for and delivering pets?" The article dealt mostly with body design and the need for keeping each enclosure isolated from all others and from the outside, yet providing adequate ventilation. Recommended was a system of air openings above each cage, covered by a single roof for protection against rain and

continued on page 66



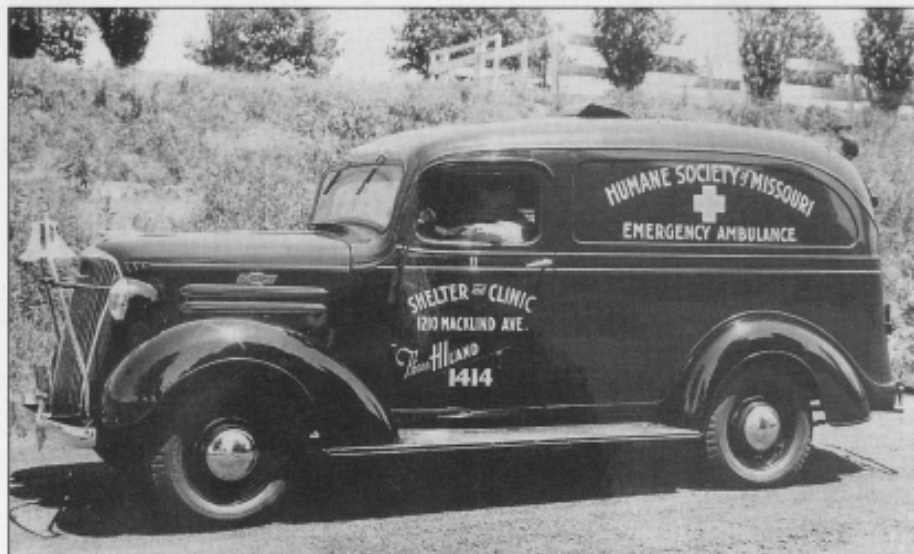
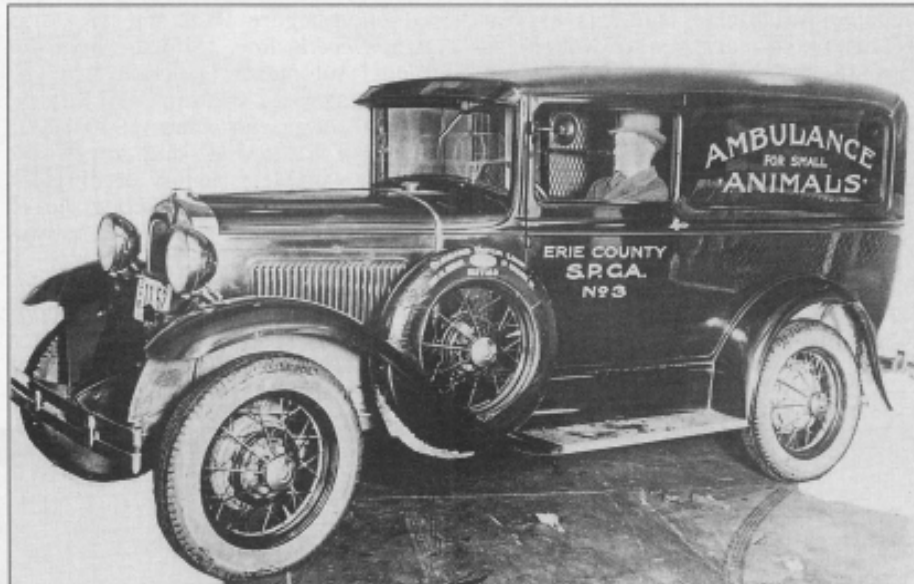


Above: Horsing around with a dog catcher's net. Truck is a Ford T with screen mesh compartments. **Left:** San Rafael, California, used this 1934 Dodge. **Below:** A covered, wire mesh cage was placed inside a 1937 Dodge pickup box. Rig was used by Waco Humane Society.





Above: A multiple-compartment body built by Broenen, on a 1937 Dodge, for use in Milwaukee. **Right:** This was unit 3 operated by the Erie County SPCA. Model A Ford panel has wire mesh behind driver. **Below:** This 1937 Chevrolet panel truck was operated in Missouri. Note bell. **Bottom:** This 1941 Chevrolet had a ladder rack, six compartments for live animals, six compartments for holding equipment, and a lethal chamber.



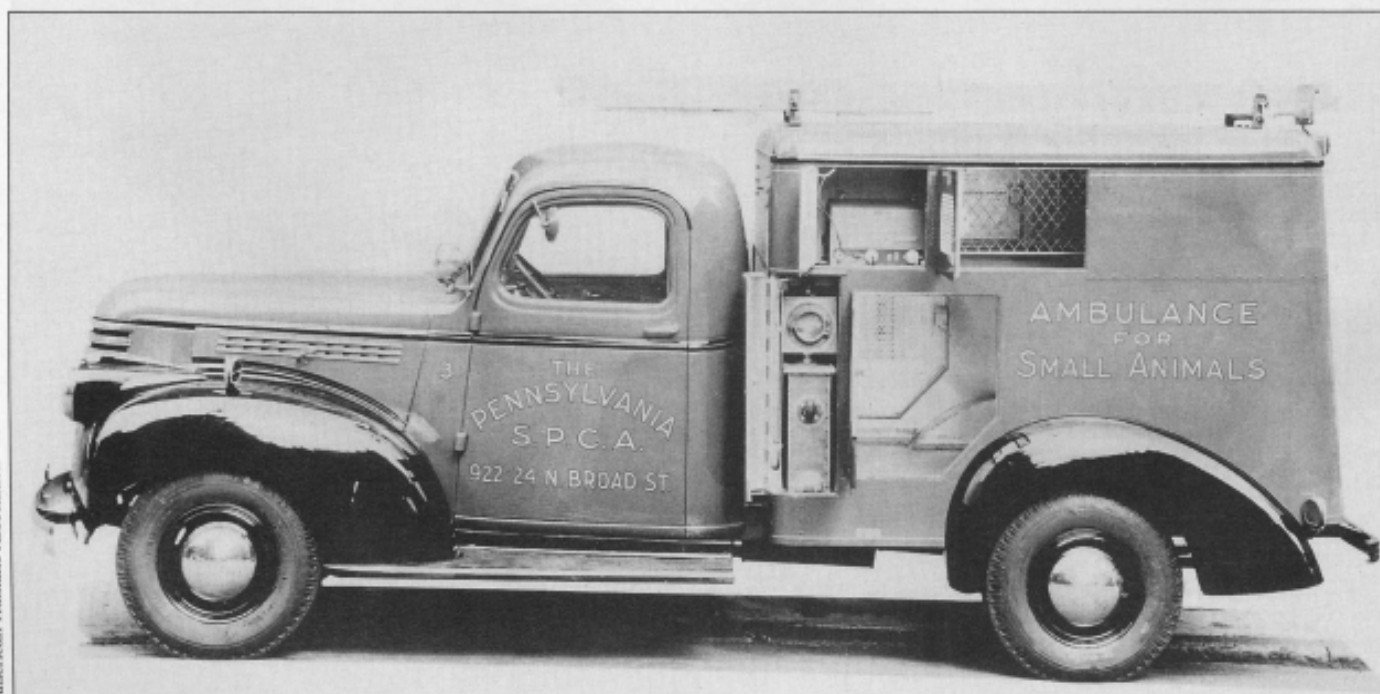
Picking Up Pups

continued from page 51

snow. Floors inside the compartments were designed for easy cleaning.

Small animal trucks also carried the various tools of a dogcatcher's trade. In the 1930s, many had one lethal chamber, made with icebox-type hardware into which the truck's exhaust would be temporarily routed. The chamber would be metal-lined and have a removable tray at the bottom.

The pictures show trucks used up until 1950. Today's bodies are of similar design but would have more fiberglass, and the trucks are radio-equipped. There are probably no horse ambulances left and, we hope, no more dogcatchers with lethal chambers. ☞





Above: A 1949 Dodge with a body built by Badger Auto Body Co., for use in Milwaukee. **Left:** An early electric truck used by Boston's Animal Rescue League. **Below:** This 1946 Ford was used by the Delaware County SPCA in Media, Pennsylvania.



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The instructor is a Certified Euthanasia Technician in the State of Illinois with years of experience. This curriculum has been approved by the States of Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. It may also be used in Iowa, Indiana, and Kansas. **Registration is limited to those working in companion animal welfare and control.**

For information on scheduling an EBI in Animal Shelters workshop in your area, or the schedule of upcoming workshops, go to www.iawf.net or contact training@iawf.net. If you have questions, contact training@iawf.net.

