I
n conceiving The HSUS in 1954, the founders of the organiza-
tion had two enduring goals: 1) to confront large-scale na-
tional forms of cruelty, such as animal fighting, puppy mills,
and dog dealers, that were too entrenched and widespread
for local humane organizations to fight effectively, and 2) to focus
on the protection of all animals, including the inhumane slaughter
of farm animals and wildlife abuses.

The HSUS today is still centered on these founding principles. We
care for and provide direct services for an amazing number of an-
imals—more than 70,000 in 2008. At the same time, we are work-
ing hard to increase standards and effectiveness among animal
shelters and to eliminate the tragedy of the euthanasia of healthy
and treasured dogs and cats. And we are saving countless animals
by protecting habitat through our Humane Society Wildlife Land
Trust. But our work to encourage more enlightened social behav-
ior toward animals and to reform public policy and corporate prac-
tices has the potential to touch the lives of billions of animals—far
more than any hands-on programs could possibly reach.

As we reflect on our accomplishments of 2008, the evidence of
change surrounds us. The HSUS assisted in 57 raids of dogfight-
ning and cockfighting operations. We raided and shut down puppy
mills from Tennessee to Quebec and rescued thousands of dogs
from deprivation and squalor—in addition to passing a federal
law to ban the import of dogs younger than 6 months from for-
eign puppy mills. We helped end greyhound racing in Massachu-
setts and blocked an effort to establish wolf hunting and trapping
in the Northern Rockies and Upper Great Lakes regions. We per-
suaded companies to step selling fur, and we continued to apply
enormous pressure on Canada to end its barbaric seal hunt. We
fought the exotic wildlife trade on many fronts.

More than any previous year, we gained ground in addressing
major problems with industrial agriculture and factory farming.
Our high-impact campaigns attracted the full focus of industry. By
the year’s end, we validated the notion that Americans care about
the treatment of all animals, including those raised for food.

The year began with the most impactful investigation in The
HSUS’s history. One undercover investigator, possessed with for-
tryside and a tiny hidden camera strapped to his chest, recorded
evidence of the systematic abuse of dairy cows during a six-week
investigation. Workers at the Westland/Hallmark slaughter plant
in Chino, Calif.—the number two supplier to the National School
Lunch Program—were shown tossing cows downed by illness
or injury to get them to stand and walk to the slaughter area. The
images of cows rammed by forklifts, kicked, or harassed with elec-
tric prods left decent people wondering about the integrity of the
food supply and the people involved in the production chain.

Our investigation caused the $100 million company to shut down,
prompted schools across the nation to take beef off the menu for a
period, triggered eight congressional hearings, and led to the
largest meat recall in American history. The U.S. Department of
Agriculture announced it would halt the slaughter of downed cows.
The footage, broadcast worldwide, prompted tens of thou-
sands of consumers to riot in the streets of South Korea—one of
America’s largest beef importers.

Americans get an ugly, inside look at modern-day slaughter
plants, and they didn’t like the callousness or the cruelty they saw.

As we rolled out the results of the Westland investigation—along
with further evidence of cruel treatment of downed cows at five
stockyards across the country, HSUS volunteers were also gath-
ering signatures in California to qualify the Prevention of Farm
Animal Cruelty Act, Proposition 2, for the November 2008 ballot.
Eventually, we amassed 800,000 signatures to place Proposition 2
on the ballot—to ban confining veal calves, breeding pigs, and
egg-laying hens in crates or cages. With 20 million animals con-
fined in these ways, there was much at stake, and the outcome
would prove to be a game of Americans’ tolerance for these
inhumane systems.

In the end, California voters approved Proposition 2 by a nearly
two-to-one margin, sending an unmistakable signal to agribusi-
ness that it must change its methods. With Oprah Winfrey, Ellen
DeGeneres, and the national media devoting attention to the con-
trovery—on top of the exposure generated by our Westland
investigation—the issue of food production and animal welfare
moved out of the shadows and into the spotlight.

Indeed, that’s what we do at The HSUS. We document abuse.
We expose cruelty. We advance legislation and legal actions. We
work with corporate partners: We educate. We rescue animals.
And we foster change.

The new laws, the positive movement in corporate boardrooms,
the increasing public enlightenment and awareness, and the
arrests of abusers are all markers of our success. They are tangi-
ble indicators of what your support allows. And as we march
ahead, we’ll apply your investments with care.

The HSUS holds the highest four-star rating from Charity Navigator, America’s pre-
mier independent charity evaluator, and meets all applicable stan-

To face the challenges ahead, we must be unrelenting but also
adequately equipped. We are uniquely able to tackle abuse from
multiple angles. We count on you to participate in these tasks and
support this work. Your generosity allows it all to occur. If past
is prologue, I know that together we can continue to change the
world for animals—at a faster pace than ever before.

Wayne Pacelle
President & CEO
The Humane Society of the United States