HSUS has succeeded in bringing the plight of zoo animals to the attention of all Americans.

The Humane Society of the United States has taken the lead for the past 3½ years in reforming American zoos. HSUS has awakened Americans to the fact that wild animals have been caged inhumanely for many decades in the nation's zoos and that major and drastic actions are necessary to correct these problems.

While HSUS has continued to insist that no wild animal should be exploited simply to create an attraction or exhibit, such is not the state of the world as it exists today. Consequently, HSUS is determined to do everything in its power to alleviate the suffering of wild animals now in confinement.

When HSUS launched a nationwide investigation of zoos in the summer of 1971, many Americans thought of zoos as nothing more than sources of entertainment. As a result, animals were living in cramped, unimaginative surroundings that gave them little or no chance to demonstrate their natural lifestyles and often turned them into neurotic creatures with little similarity to their relatives in the wild.

After visiting 120 zoos during the first 12 months of the investigation, HSUS zoo investigator Sue Press-
man concluded that many of the zoos were "nothing more than ghettos for animals." Most zoos were so confined that they were unable to keep one or two examples of every species possible that they failed to provide adequate quarters for the animals they already had. Among the cruel conditions she found was the confinement of animals to disease through unsanitary procedures and the provision of animals with deficient diets. As a result of the investigations, almost every one of these zoos has received increased funding for hire of trained personnel and the adoption of minimum or higher standards of health and care for the animals.

Mrs. Pressman and other HSUS officials have spread the word loud and clear that unless citizens of the community involve themselves in obtaining changes necessary to make their zoo humane, it is going to be closed. One of the toughest aspects of the zoo reform campaign has been the effort to convince municipal officials to make the zoo to a higher priority when they are considering programming and funding. As one local zoo employee complained, "Zoos begin with a Z, the end of the alphabet, and that's where they are when it comes to a city budget." It has been a rare politician or public administrator who has placed any importance on the zoo, largely because most friends of zoos haven't been well enough organized to compete with the many other community interest groups for the tax dollar. But the publicity generated by the HSUS investigations has awakened many citizens to the shame of their hometown zoos, and, as a result, municipal officials are now receiving pressure to take a good, hard look at the zoo.

Furthermore, HSUS has cautioned city officials that unless they take HSUS is determined to do everything in its power to alleviate the suffering of wild animals now in confinement.

drastic steps to change inhumane conditions at their zoos they can be personally charged with cruelty to animals.

Consequently, zoos are now in a better position than ever before to provide proper care and conditions for their animals. In Los Angeles, for example, the Recreation and Parks Commission allocated $450,000 to 18 emergency projects for the zoo shortly after HSUS investigators criticized the 8-year-old zoo for its 50-year-old ideas. Roger Caras, an HSUS vice president, was commissioned by New York City to conduct a study of the New York City zoos after severe criticism of the zoos by HSUS and other organizations.

Nevertheless, the amount of money needed to transform major zoos into humane environments is enormous. A plan to update Boston's Franklin Park Zoo has a price tag of $27 million. The new World of Birds building erected by the New York Zoological Society cost $4 million, and the Minnesota State Zoo is spending $2.5 million for a northern animal exhibit.

"Every community in the United States with a zoo must make a decision before this year is out as to whether it is going to make its zoo a totally humane facility or close it," declared HSUS President John A. Hoyt. "Let's stop permitting man to exploit wild animals!"

In addition to working with zoos to make them humane, HSUS has placed emphasis on making zoos the source of positive learning experiences. It is important, HSUS believes, that people receive more than entertainment from zoos; each visit should increase their knowledge about every species they view.

Several zoos, through cooperation with HSUS and other organizations, have undertaken programs to breed species that are becoming extinct in the wild. HSUS believes that, while this is a valid objective, there are few zoos that can give propagation of nearly extinct species the serious scientific attention it requires.

While it had been widely assumed that ride-through or drive-through zoos would be an improvement over traditional zoos, it hasn't turned out that way. Because very few non-profit zoos can afford the land necessary for such ventures, ride-through zoos are developed and operated like any other commercial enterprise; animal welfare, conservation, and education become secondary to making money. Near Richmond, Va., Lion Country Safari set up a ride-through zoo as part of a mammoth recreation center developed by a broadcasting company. Wild animals add "one more element, just like another ride," an official of the company was quoted as saying. Warner Brothers, ABC Paramount and Maxwell's Plum, a famous New York City restaurant, all own at least one ride-through zoo.
Investment shares in Lion Country Safari are available in over-the-counter stock. With an adult giraffe now selling for $15,000 in the zoo trade, respect for life easily becomes merely respect for a money making commodity.

But, only two to three years after their popular beginnings, ride-through zoos are in trouble. Even the better facilities have failed to reach anticipated levels of attendance. The energy crisis, which changed the weekend travel habits of Americans, has been a major factor. The steep admission prices, as high as $20.00 for an average size family, has been another one. But equally as significant, the zoological profession believes, is the absence of the sociability element that makes city zoos a popular gathering place for urban residents. When you’re restricted to a car or a monorail train, there is no opportunity to talk with other visitors or to develop a feeling of familiarity with the animals. For all of these reasons combined, the ride-through zoo seems to fall in the same category as Niagara Falls: everyone wants to see it, but once is enough.

HSUS is particularly concerned about the proliferation of ride-through parks within driving distance of the same urban areas. Two parks are operated in the small state of New Jersey, while two others are within a short distance of Washington, D.C. What happens to the animals if any of these zoos fails to realize anticipated profits? One ride-through park has already gone bankrupt after a second park opened within a few miles of it outside Dallas. Many of the animals remained in the park for a year after it closed, with only a caretaker staff to attend to their very special needs.

HSUS has also directed its attention to stopping the exploitation of animals as attractions for business enterprises. In 1971 protests from hundreds of HSUS members succeeded in getting Tufty the Bengal tiger released from a glass cage behind a bar in a White Plains, N.Y., health club and relocating him in a natural habitat zoo in Texas. Since then HSUS has been responsible for relocating bears from a roadside bar and grill in South Carolina, an Ohio riding stable, and an auction house in Florida to natural habitat surroundings.

Through investigations, educational programs, and nationwide publicity, HSUS has succeeded in bringing the plight of zoo animals to the attention of all Americans. As a result, flagrant cruelties to wild animals in confinement have been considerably reduced. But the work is far from finished.

To make further progress in zoo reform, HSUS and other animal welfare organizations need national standards for the housing, health, and care of animals in confinement. The Animal Welfare Act of 1970 provided some help by requiring that all animal exhibits be licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but it fell far short by leaving too much discretion to the USDA veterinarians who have responsibility for interpreting the law.

“A veterinarian who is used to
"HSUS has carried the burden of zoo reform for the past 3 1/2 years. The responsibility should now be shifted to the federal government."

Inspecting farm animals can't be expected to understand the needs of animals within the confines of a zoo," Mrs. Pressman said.

HSUS also believes that the standards should be high enough to provide enrichment for the animals, rather than the minimum health and welfare that the Animal Welfare Act provided.

By 1974 the waves begun by the HSUS zoo investigations had reached Capitol Hill, where several lawmakers realized that stronger federal legislation was needed to change the nation's zoos. Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.) and Reps. William Whitehurst (R-Va.) and John Dingell (D-Mich.) introduced legislation with various approaches for achieving this objective. Each of these bills, however, had serious flaws. The best aspects of all three bills have now been put together in a single bill that Representative Dingell has introduced in the new Congress.

At his request, HSUS officials have shared their findings about zoo needs and made recommendations for remedial programs. The new bill incorporates many of those recommendations.

The nucleus of the legislation would be a requirement that all facilities that keep exotic animals be licensed, whether the animals are being displayed to the public or not. It would cover all types of zoos, municipal or private (including roadside zoos), urban or ride-through, aquariums, circuses, humane societies that maintain wildlife for any purpose, nature centers, and trail museums. A Certification Board would be created to establish specific requirements for the housing and care of each species in every type of facility. The board would be comprised of representatives of national animal welfare organizations, zoo professionals, and government officials.

Zoos that cannot meet these requirements will be closed. If the legislation is enacted, the number of zoos in this country may be reduced to a small portion of the total number today. That is how it should be, HSUS believes—only the institutions that can do an effective job should be permitted to continue operation.

Hardest hit will be the roadside menageries, which HSUS and other animal welfare organizations have opposed for many years. Most of these animal exploitation operations will be put out of business.

The Dingell bill is now pending before the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife Conservation and the Environment of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, Robert L. Leggett (D-Calif.), chairman.

Additional copies of this report are available at 5¢ each from The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

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