t’s The HSUS’s distinct and critical role to take on the big battles for animals—from factory farming to Canada’s seal hunt to the exotic animal trade.

Our goals are simple: to achieve tangible outcomes that reduce suffering and prevent cruelty and to foster an ethic of compassion and personal responsibility.

While we take on institutionalized forms of cruelty that few others have the resources to address in a serious way, we never forget our obligation to protect companion animals. In particular, we are the nation’s leading advocates and protectors of dogs.

The HSUS is the only animal protection organization with a unit singularly dedicated to combating dogfighting. We have crafted the nation’s laws against animal fighting, making dogfighting a felony in every state and also a federal felony. We work to enforce these laws by joining with police to raid illegal operations—with The HSUS orchestrating or assisting raids nearly every week of the year. With our national tip lines, rewards programs, and community-based outreach programs for at-risk youth in major cities, our unmistakable objective is to eradicate this vile industry.

Puppy mill operators are also right to fear us. This year, we have already rescued more than 2,000 dogs from squalid conditions in mills from Washington state to Texas. We are passing laws to crack down on the activity; targeting pet stores trafficking in dogs, including Petland, the nation’s largest retailer of puppy mill dogs; educating the public about not buying dogs from mills or Internet sellers; and investigating dog auctions, mills, and pet stores. It is unconscionable that these mills operate and churn out thousands of sick dogs when so many others are desperate for loving homes.

The mills exist only because people purchase animals, sometimes unwittingly, from these operations. We strive to expose the problems with these businesses and demonstrate that the best sources for loving dogs and cats are shelters and rescue groups. This September, we launched an unprecedented advertising campaign—the Shelter Pet Project, in collaboration with The Ad Council, Maddie’s Fund, and local animal welfare groups across the country—to emphasize that there’s nothing wrong with shelter pets. On the contrary, they often end up homeless because of a human failing or complication in life, not because they are somehow defective. This project may generate $40 to $80 million worth of donated advertising a year, and its goal is to stop the needless euthanasia of healthy and treatable dogs and cats in shelters across America in the years ahead.

Meanwhile, we support local shelters in a myriad of ways: through Animal Care Expo (the nation’s largest trade show for sheltering professionals), the award-winning Animal Sheltering magazine, Humane Society University, and a raft of web resources for shelters and pet owners. Our objective is to strengthen the capacity of local organizations working to solve the homeless animal problem.

Extending our commitment to dogs across the globe, our sister organization, Humane Society International, is launching programs to protect “street dogs” in developing countries. In the nation of Bhutan, for instance, we aim to sterilize as many as 50,000 homeless dogs. We are also doing similar work in India, and looking to expand that work to Thailand and other countries in Asia, where the problems are acute.

To fight these battles, we make use of limited resources. But we also try to find new resources or to protect money set aside for these purposes. That’s why it was The HSUS, backed by the ASPCA and Maddie’s Fund, that stepped in to sue the trustees of the massive Leona Helmsley estate after they defied Mrs. Helmsley’s wishes to allocate a majority of her $5 billion to the care and welfare of dogs. This unprecedented investment in dog welfare could be a game-changer for local and national groups working to end overpopulation of dogs, promote dog adoption and spay/neuter, and end dogfighting and puppy mills.

Dogs provide so much love and companionship to us. We must do the same for them, even though we can’t do it quite as effortlessly as they do. But we’re committed to holding all people to that standard. By strategically allocating the resources you provide to The HSUS, we get closer to that goal every day. In terms of this work, our ultimate objective is this: to save one dog at a time, until all are saved.

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