Teaming up to save animals’ lives

The HSUS, HSI and other affiliates combined to rescue and care for nearly 300,000 animals in 2016. We saved animals from fighting pits, natural disasters, life on the streets, construction projects in their habitats, lethal population management programs and other crises. But we don’t work alone. We can do this only with your support and help from volunteers, and we partner with governments, law enforcement agencies, local organizations and others to touch the lives of many more animals than we could reach on our own.

It was a year of winds and water for HSUS and HSI disaster responders, with flooding in Mississippi, Texas, West Virginia and Louisiana and hurricanes in South Carolina, Haiti and Costa Rica. Our Animal Rescue Team transported more than 300 shelter animals out of the path of Hurricane Matthew and then returned to rescue over 150 pets, including a dog and three cats trapped in an almost fully submerged school bus. In Haiti, HSI cared for more than 1,500 animals, from livestock to pets.

In Ohio, we teamed up with the Gallia County Sheriff’s Office and the Dog Warden’s Office to rescue 66 dogs and three horses from dangerous living conditions, with high ammonia levels and limited access to food and water. Many animals needed medical treatment; veterinarians administered emergency care on-site. Responders from Red Rover and HSUS volunteers helped us care for dogs at our emergency shelter. When the animals were ready, Emergency Placement Partners in Ohio, Maine and West Virginia helped them find their forever homes.

For a federal anti-dogfighting operation, our Animal Rescue Team provided intelligence on dozens of suspected targets and coordinated rescue efforts when the authorities moved in. A total of 66 dogs were saved and nine people charged. The HSUS also paid out 18 rewards to tipsters whose information helped catch and convict animal fighters.

For the last decade, The HSUS and Saving Florida’s Gopher Tortoises have worked with Florida developers to relocate gopher tortoises, considered a “threatened” species under state law. In that time, we have dug up and transported nearly 6,000 tortoises—more than 900 of them in 2016—to safe habitats to keep them from being buried alive by new development.

Our Prairie Dog Coalition saved more than 1,600 prairie dogs. Prairie dogs are a keystone species, vital to Western grassland ecosystems, but many people see them as pests to be killed. The coalition relocates at-risk prairie dogs to protected lands and works with communities to end the use of lethal control methods. Convincing the U.S. Forest Service to discard harmful amendments to the Thunder Basin National Grassland management plan protected some 180,000 prairie dogs on 18,000 acres.

Through our Wild Neighbors program, we partnered with animal care and control agencies and community
leaders to promote innovative, proven and non-lethal solutions to wildlife conflicts. We provided training in humane wildlife conflict resolution to more than 1,700 animal control and police officers, shelter staff, wildlife rehabilitators and members of the public from more than 250 communities across the country, increasing the number of hands helping wildlife.

The HSUS has long championed fertility control to manage wildlife populations, and we have ongoing projects for white-tailed deer, wild horses and burros. This year, we partnered with the Dietrich W. Botstiber Foundation to launch the Botstiber International Institute for Wildlife Fertility Control to advance the development and implementation of fertility control methods.

In Puerto Rico, the mayor of the island of Vieques asked our Humane States team for help with nearly 2,000 free-roaming horses. The animals are a tourist attraction—but, in rising numbers, also a problem. Drought has sent desperate horses into town in search of water sources. Some were hit by cars; others learned how to break water pipes. We began a multi-year program to reduce and stabilize the number of horses by treating mares with the immunocontraceptive PZP. We also had water troughs placed closer to the horses’ natural habitat, to the joy of locals who love the horses and are eager to help them.