



As actress Wendie Malick prepared to speak on Capitol Hill last year, a graphic video on horse slaughter was shown in the hearing room.

"It almost took my breath away," remembers Malick, who was advocating for the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act. "I was reeling when I had to sort of summon up all of my focus and courage to be able to calmly—as calmly as possible—speak."

Taking on animal cruelty is Malick's calling card. She has appeared in HSUS television appeals, regularly presents at the organization's annual Genesis Awards, and is a member of the Humane Society Legislative Fund's National Council. Her connection with animals dates to her childhood in Buffalo, when her "older sister" was the family's pet collie. Nowadays, she and her husband look after three horses, two dogs, and two miniature donkeys, and she plans to produce a movie about animal advocate Wild Horse Annie.

Malick spoke recently with assistant managing editor Michael Sharp for this excerpted interview.

Q: Do you still start your days working with your horses?

MALICK: I start every day with my face in fur. And I can't ever keep a manicure for more than a day or two because I'm always scratching, petting, or grooming somebody. It absolutely grounds me to the earth, and there is that unspoken language that we share with the animals we live with that I just find calms me down and centers me.

Q: What has particularly moved you about the plight of wild horses, who are being forced off the range by the Bureau of Land Management under pressure from ranchers?

MALICK: Dogs have always been the mainstay of my life, but I came to horses and riding when I was 40, when I moved to the country here in LA. There's something about looking into a horse's eyes. There's an ancient quality to them, a primal quality, that really moves me deeply. And when I found out that the last remaining herds are being rounded up as we speak, this just seemed untenable. I consider them the living symbols of independence and freedom—you know, sort of what this whole country was built on.

Last year, I joined [The HSUS's] Nancy Perry and Jennifer Fearing, and we went up to witness one of the [federal] roundups in Northern California. And they actually had to cancel that one due to high-velocity winds that day, but we did go to the holding facility after that and saw what were once these magnificent wild and free animals now in sort of a prison camp for horses that

had absolutely no shelter and was out in a dusty plain. And it was pretty heartbreaking.

Q: Your *Hot in Cleveland* costar Betty White recorded a phone message this past election season in support of Missouri's Puppy Mill Cruelty Prevention Act. Do you talk about animal issues on the set?

MALICK: Absolutely. I share videos with her of the new donkeys who arrived a couple of months ago, and we're always telling each other stories about our critters and then talking about other animal issues that we might be able to bring to light. She was so terrific with the puppy mill [call]. I'd asked her if she would do it for us, and she was totally game and I think probably really helped get the word out.

Q: Can humor be an effective tool in advocacy?

MALICK: It sort of lowers the temperature in the room and allows us to open a door to each other. One of my huge things is don't make assumptions. [If you] talk to someone who is possibly a rancher or someone you think might be on the other side of an issue—sometimes you would be surprised that there is something that you two share, in terms of your respect for your fellow creatures on this planet. And I think we all have to learn how to just take a deep breath and give each other a chance.

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