



An October 2011 tragedy in Zanesville, Ohio, spurred state legislation to restrict exotic animal ownership.

## Exotic Victory

The HSUS secures Ohio ban

**At Ohio's exotic animal facilities—**collectors masquerading as sanctuaries and backyard “zoos” offering photo ops with baby animals—the record of abuse is extensive. Many animals are confined to run-down, feces-filled enclosures and

denied necessities such as adequate veterinary care. At one facility, a primate was kept in an enclosure designed for a parrot, as were a bear and two lion cubs. At another, big cats chained for petting opportunities had their eyes sprayed with vinegar to repress aggression. At a third, a bear had to be euthanized after being attacked by a tiger in an adjacent cage.

The record of attacks on people is equally appalling: torn limbs, near-fatal

maulings, and deaths. “For years, Ohio has been a rogue state as far as having virtually zero regulations for exotic pet ownership,” says HSUS state director Karen Minton.

The situation took on new urgency in October 2011, when Terry Thompson freed dozens of bears, tigers, lions, and wolves from cages at his Zanesville property and then committed suicide, forcing authorities to kill 49 animals. After a state task force on which The HSUS served recommended strict regulations, lawmakers in March introduced a state ban on private ownership of some dangerous wild animals. While the Columbus Zoo’s Jack Hanna heavily promoted the legislation, HSUS staff sent email alerts and wrote editorials in favor, commissioned a survey showing support from a majority of Ohio voters, and organized testimony.

In June, Gov. John Kasich signed the ban into law. It goes into effect Jan. 1, 2014, leaving just six states with few or no restrictions on the private possession of dangerous wild animals: West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Wisconsin, and Nevada.

— Ruthanne Johnson

## There Oughta Be Laws

**With a bill on the line** to ban hound hunting of bears and bobcats, one family spent two days appealing to California lawmakers for support; hand-delivered letters detailed how hound hunters have terrorized bears near the family’s mountain cabin. Legislative staff reported being impressed and enlightened, says HSUS senior state director Jennifer Fearing, citing the response as “evidence of the impact citizen advocates can make.”

Californians made themselves heard on the hounding ban, packing hearings in support, while The HSUS mobilized advocates, submitted letters to the editor, and shared testimony. In late September, Gov. Jerry Brown signed S.B. 1221 into law.

Among other state legislation The HSUS tackled this year:

► **Louisiana roadside sales of pets:** When northeast Louisiana animal advocates persuaded local governments to ban roadside sales of pets, they thought the man selling puppies in parking lots from his trailer would stop. But he simply drove his mobile puppy

mill to the next unregulated parish. So HSUS staff and state Rep. Tony Ligi authored a statewide ban on selling cats and dogs from roadsides, flea markets, and public recreational areas. The law took effect in August.

► **Minnesota pound seizures:** Since 1949, Minnesota law had forced publicly funded shelters to relinquish animals to research facilities if they weren’t claimed or adopted after a holding period. But things changed after HSUS senior state director Howard Goldman enlisted legislators to support a repeal. He organized testimony, alerted constituents, and even persuaded the University of Minnesota—which had previously used shelter animals in its research and training—not to oppose the measure. The repeal took effect in August.

► **Illinois shark finning:** Though far from a major coastline, Illinois has one of the largest U.S. markets for shark fin soup. HSUS state director Kristen Strawbridge secured legislative sponsorship for a state ban on the possession, sale, trade, and distribution of shark fins. The law takes effect in January, positioning Illinois alongside California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington in providing much-needed protections for sharks.





# Patrolling the Raccoon Highway

HSUS experts crawl their way to work

**Driving in her car** late one afternoon, Cam MacQueen was horrified to see a caged raccoon jostling atop a junk heap in a pickup truck bed. She sped through traffic in pursuit, pulling alongside at a stoplight to ask the driver about the animal's fate. "He said his pest control company had a gas chamber in their office," says MacQueen. After she implored him to spare the young raccoon's life, the man promised to release the animal at a nearby lake, but she knew it was a lie. The image sat like a stone in the pit of her stomach.

Two weeks later, she spotted another vehicle advertising a kinder, more effective approach to wildlife conflicts: "Animals-Community-Environment." After following the van to within blocks of her Maryland home, MacQueen introduced herself to wildlife control operators John Griffin and Lori Thiele, who detailed their business model of nonlethal solutions. "It was like an answer to everything," says MacQueen.

That chance 2007 meeting brought about a new partnership for MacQueen's Greenbelt Homes Inc. community, a 1,600-home cooperative built in the 1930s and 1940s whose residents take pride in its pet-friendly spaces, protected forests, and green philosophy. At MacQueen's recommendation, GHI's management company hired Griffin and Thiele—now with The HSUS's Humane Wildlife Services program—to humanely evict raccoons and other wild animals who'd been accessing crawl spaces beneath homes via a network of defunct steam tunnels. The community

had been dealing with the situation by trapping and releasing animals off property—a practice that can be fatal—and some of the animals had suffered cage-related injuries.

Today, hundreds of animals have been spared those fates thanks to HWS's work on the "raccoon highway." For MacQueen, the successes mean the caged raccoon did not die in vain. "By getting [HWS] involved in this community and helping to spread the word, that's his legacy," she says. "... I just love what they do ... and wish there were a lot more of them out there."

— *Ruthanne Johnson*

## HOW IT WORKS

- 1 Wearing a protective suit and mask, Humane Wildlife Services' Lori Thiele investigates crawl spaces beneath Maryland's Greenbelt Homes Inc. community.
- 2 When she finds signs of animal activity, she installs a one-way "door" that locks behind the animals when they exit.
- 3 Thiele then seals the entrance against additional unwanted guests. To prevent orphaning, work stops during baby season.

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES



**Rubbing elbows** with a rhinoceros at a sanctuary in Kenya, retired NBA superstar Yao Ming likened the experience to guarding Shaquille O’Neal. “These are immense and powerful creatures. ... But this power is meaningless in the face of a poacher’s bullet or wire snare.” Yao visited Africa with advocacy group WildAid to film a documentary on the plight of rhinos and elephants poached for their horns and tusks. He hopes raising awareness among his Chinese countrymen will decrease the demand for ivory and horn products.



**The California Fish and Game Commission** unanimously voted to remove Dan Richards as president in August, seven months after he ignited a firestorm by proudly posing for a photograph with a mountain lion he had killed after hounds chased the animal up a tree at an Idaho ranch. Hunting mountain lions is legal in Idaho but banned in California; Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom had urged Richards to resign, writing, “While not in California at the time, your actions call into question whether you can live up to the calling of your office.”



**Ohio Judge** Kathleen Ann Sutula received a standing ovation from courtroom observers after sentencing confessed dogfighter Collin Rand Jr. to six months in jail and more than \$12,000 in fines, restitution, and court costs, the maximum punishment the law allowed. She also banned him from owning a dog. Sutula warned Rand that she would send him to prison for more than 12 years if he violated his sentence, adding “If I had the freedom and discretion, you’d be serving ... 27 years. A year for each dog.”

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LSU's Wendy Wolfson, assisted by students Lauren Oray and Taylor Simon, shows shelter dog Roscoe some love during an exam.

## A Turn for the Better

Shelter partnerships transform LSU vet school

**More than a decade ago**, the Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine had a typical curriculum: Students performed surgeries on healthy animals from a number of area shelters, then euthanized them. The procedures were performed for teaching purposes, not because animals needed them, so recovery was not considered humane, says Joseph Taboada, a veterinarian and associate dean for student and academic affairs.

Today, thanks largely to \$1 million in HSUS funding, the curriculum has changed radically, with terminal surgeries ended, more mannequins and cadavers incorporated into training, and students providing services to shelters in the form of spay/neuter surgeries. Fourth-year students also examine shelter animals, vaccinate and deworm them, and talk to shelter staff about zoonotic diseases and the importance of proper sanitation.

"When we first started, there was some reluctance on the part of the faculty to put

students into shelters," Taboada says. "And that's changed completely. I think that now if you asked, certainly the clinical faculty, most of them would say that this is a really important part of what we do."

The changes mark a nationwide move away from a practice that sparked debate for decades. More than half of the 28 U.S. veterinary schools have eliminated terminal surgeries from their required small-animal curriculum, and that number continues to grow, according to estimates



Oray cares for shelter cat Milley.

by the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association, an HSUS affiliate that advocates for the change.

LSU's transformation also heralds an embrace of shelter medicine programs, in place in about half of veterinary schools. The programs sensitize students to the needs of homeless animals, positioning them to ultimately reduce euthanasia and improve animal care through high-volume spay/neuter and other shelter management best practices.

At LSU, shelter medicine program director Wendy Wolfson says the change since she graduated from the school 26 years ago is dramatic. "When I was in school, they didn't offer shelter anything. Are you kidding?" Now, she notes, a vibrant shelter medicine club even raises money for shelter supplies and organizes "learning days" for students to go into shelters to conduct exams and vaccinate animals.

Wolfson worked for the Louisiana SPCA in New Orleans for 21 years, including 15 as medical director. She recalls that hiring veterinarians to work in shelters was nearly impossible; the job just wasn't seen as desirable. As a shelter medicine instructor, Wolfson says she feels compelled to teach students about shelters' need for veterinary help. She tries to ingrain a sense of responsibility so that even if students don't seek a shelter job, they'll at least volunteer. She also points out that shelter veterinary work is almost never boring and employees are often treated as well as those in private practice. A new attitude does seem to be taking hold: Taboada reports that prospective students often ask if LSU will position them for a career in shelter medicine.

On the flip side, some shelters that wouldn't have considered hiring a veterinarian 10 years ago are doing so now, Taboada says. "Now I think that the shelter community within Louisiana looks to LSU as being an expert that can help them," he says, noting that Wolfson sometimes gets calls for advice from shelters that aren't even in the program. "... That relationship just wasn't here before we started this program." — James Hettinger