

FRANK LOFTUS

HSUS SENIOR PRODUCER, VIDEO & MULTIMEDIA

// BY CATHERINE HESS

PUTTING A FACE ON DOGFIGHTING: The top of his nose was gashed, but the dog wagged his tail and kissed his rescuers. Even videographer Frank Loftus felt Stallone's warm personality from behind the lens. The dog loved everyone.

Veterinarians examined Stallone's dogfighting injuries and, because his wounds were so severe, decided to euthanize him. It struck Loftus that those last moments, with Stallone reveling in attention and touch, were the happiest part of the dog's life. Loftus filmed Stallone until shortly before his merciful death.

Afterward, he kept thinking of the dog—not only his injuries, but his loneliness, when he so clearly adored people. Because this was an ongoing federal case, the footage couldn't be made public for more than a year. When Loftus finally posted "Stallone: The Face of Dogfighting" online, it racked up more than 3 million views and became the top HSUS video on YouTube. In 2011, the video won a Silver Telly Award.

Stallone's case was just one of dozens of rescues and raids that Loftus witnesses each year. And while scenes like Stallone's death would quickly burn out many videographers, Loftus concentrates hard on how many animals will eventually be spared the misery he is filming.

STORIES ON A MISSION: Loftus always looks for stories and spontaneous, raw emotional moments, like the time two rescuers at a hoarding situation in Mississippi turned around to discover a days-old kitten, nearly dead. They reached down and picked her up. "I try to use a lot of natural sound and a lot of those moments," he says. "I try to bring the viewer there."

He is often among the first on the scene during rescues, mentally setting up shots and planning questions to ask the rescuers. His reward is seeing an animal walking on grass and breathing clean air for the first time. After a shoot, Loftus wades through hours of video in a darkened room, sometimes spending days creating a three- or four-minute video.

RISK, REWARDS: The job is not without risk. Documenting Canada's seal hunt has exposed Loftus to lethal cold, hostile sealers and helicopter travel in stormy weather. "Since we've been doing this campaign, we have saved 1.8 million seals from being slaughtered," says Grace Markarian, HSUS senior director of communications marketing and technology, "and a lot of that is due to the power of the imagery Frank brings back."

A Dog Named Gucci, the 2015 independent documentary he co-produced, told the story of a dog who was hanged, beaten and set on fire—and then lived to find a happy home. The chow-husky mix inspired Gucci's Law against animal cruelty in Alabama.

Now, Loftus stays alert for new perspectives on animal issues and enjoys seeing new videographers like his colleague Kristen Walker perfecting their craft. "It's always good," he says, "to see things through a fresh set of eyes."

