When the HSUS formed, the animal care and control community consisted of numerous poorly financed groups—many of them run on a volunteer basis—and perhaps a dozen or so well-heeled societies, mostly in the nation’s larger cities. The field also included countless municipal pounds—bleak, dismal places, run on low budgets and quite often by uncaring employees. These hundreds of organizations focused on myriad issues and approaches and were frequently not even aware of, let alone cooperating with, one another. In 1954 the humane field comprised a chaotic universe, and there were essentially no efforts underway to create order and stability. Euthanasia practices were often badly improvised, and the level of professionalism within animal care and control work was not high in most communities. Pounds and shelters were coming under terrific pressure to turn their animals over for use in research, testing, and education. This was the situation that the founders of The HSUS hoped to change, by laboring to enhance the moral and practical quality of work undertaken at the local level.

This was also the reason that early HSUS staff positions focused on field services and technical support. Fred Myers and his colleagues saw local societies and animal shelters as the central institutions of humane work, with all programs—like humane education, cruelty investigations, spay/neuter promotion, and others—revolving around them. Their staffs, their boards of directors, and their members represented the primary constituency of The HSUS. They were the people who HSUS staff members wanted to serve as well as the people upon whom the organization relied for its own growth and support. It was an important part of The HSUS’s founding vision to provide technical assistance and advice on all aspects of animal control, to help local societies to improve their facilities and their operations, to enhance the training of humane society employees, to promote the use of humane techniques and state-of-the-art equipment, and to assist communities throughout the country to draft effective animal-control ordinances.

From this early vision of service emerged the main goals of the Companion Animals section: the professionalization of animal care and shelter work at all levels, a strategy for reducing the surplus of unwanted and homeless animals, the reform of euthanasia practices, the restriction of abuses by the pet shop and commercial pet breeding trades, and the elimination of miscellaneous cruelties that cause harm to companion animals. Several generations of leadership supported these goals through public education, training, research, legislation, and media outreach.

By 2004 the Companion Animals section was one of the world’s most important sources of information and action on the wide range of companion animal issues and a steadfast advocate for appropriate reforms in shelter management, euthanasia practices, and animal control operations. During its first fifty years, The HSUS had played a crucial role in bringing heightened attention and respect to animal care and sheltering concerns. For half a century, too, The HSUS had celebrated the human-animal bond, even as it sought to encourage responsible stewardship of companion animals.
Learning, Doing, Teaching: The Early Years

Abatement of the nation’s surplus of unwanted dogs and cats was one of The HSUS’s earliest priorities. It was a strong personal concern of all four original staff members and of many of The HSUS’s first board members. According to “Doc” Thomsen, when The HSUS launched its work, organizers encountered considerable ambivalence about both spay-neuter and euthanasia among humane supporters. As it happened, however, Fred Myers was a realist, determined to set the organization he led on a path that emphasized the long-term prevention of animals’ suffering and death through aggressive and pragmatic action. The HSUS’s first publication, *They Preach Cruelty*, focused on the tragedy of surplus animals, as did subsequent brochures, titled *Puppies and Kittens—10,000 Per Hour* and *From Cause to Effect*, the last of which included a space for local societies to rubber-stamp their own names and appeals. From the start, HSUS staff members emphasized the importance of spay-neuter approaches, public education, and euthanasia in dealing with the tragedy of animal surplus. Recognizing the power of example, Fred Myers once protested to Pat Nixon, wife of then-Vice President Richard Nixon, that her cat was having too many kittens. “Until we are able to sell the public on the neutering and spaying of pets,” Myers once said, “our shelters can never be anything but slaughter houses.”¹

Among other challenges, the movement had to develop ways to contend with the owners’ reluctance to have their animals altered. The subject was plagued by misconceptions and shibboleths about its effect on animals’ weight, temperament, and overall health. Then there was the issue of cost. Many owners simply didn’t bother to deal with spaying or neutering their animals, while others balked at veterinary fees.²

The HSUS made the transformation of shelter policies nationwide a priority goal, reasoning that adoption procedures and related policies did affect the surplus animal population. In 1958, with the help of a dedicated grant from the Lyondolf Fund, The HSUS initiated production of its first audiovisual aids, consisting of a five-minute film and a slide set that dramatized the suffering resulting from animal overpopulation. The very same year, facts presented in The HSUS’s earliest folder reached an estimated thirty million Americans, fans of the comic strip *Peanuts*, who followed a four-strip series in which Charlie Brown read the publication’s contents aloud to Lucy and the eavesdropping Snoopy.³

Not all of the major shelters were stepping up to confront the surplus animal problem at this time, and The HSUS was not reticent in its indictment of confused or indifferent counsel. In 1956, when New York’s Bide-a-Wee Home Association advised citizens to let their dogs mate several times a year to prevent “sexually frustrated male dogs,” The HSUS moved quickly to condemn this advice and to remind Americans of the great tragedy of surplus animals. In 1964 The HSUS scored the ASPCA for similar indifference and pressed the nation’s first humane society to require spaying of all female dogs and cats before release to new owners.⁴

Another difficult challenge stemmed from the hostility of veterinarians, who, in the 1950s and 1960s, sought injunctions to prevent humane societies from sponsoring the practice of veterinary medicine (and especially of spay-neuter surgery) in their shelters. In 1959 in Missouri, a group of twenty-one veterinarians sought to prevent the operation of an animal clinic with a bill in the legislature and a petition for injunctive relief. The HSUS retained legal counsel in St. Louis to assist the Humane Society of Missouri and won permission to appear in the case as a friend of the court. The veterinarians’ attempt failed.⁵

The HSUS’s most important general contribution to the field of animal care and control was its fifty-year commitment to assisting organizations and communities operating pounds and shelters all over the country to improve their services. Whatever the intentions of government officials and humane society organizers in many communities, their pounds and shelter operations sometimes proved to be appallingly deficient. In the pre-1975 years, especial-
ly, many societies were using jury-rigged and ineffectual systems for euthanasia, inadvertently or intentionally causing greater harm and suffering to animals. Their housing systems were impossible to clean and disinfect, and their outdoor areas offered no protection. They were also forced to employ untrained staff. With so few outlets for proper training, attendants were often careless, lackadaisical, or ignorant in regard to basic procedures, and low-paying positions did not always attract the best applicants to pound and shelter work. There was not a single aspect of pound and shelter work that The HSUS did not seek to improve through education, counsel, training, lobbying, and other measures.

Although its founders deliberately strove to raise the humane movement’s sights to the pursuit of a broad range of issues from a national perspective, The HSUS’s involvement with local animal control work was always very direct. In fact, founder Larry Andrews’s main activity as director of field services involved personal interaction with the operators of local humane societies and public pounds. Andrews traveled extensively, much as he had done for AHA, visiting facilities, assessing their needs, meeting with staff and boards of directors, and providing education and training for shelter operation, adoption policies, euthanasia procedures, humane education, cruelty investigation, and promoting the use of HSUS educational materials.

In the late 1950s, The HSUS experienced a noticeable increase in pleas for technical assistance and aid from municipalities facing the challenges of local animal control. Taking these early inquiries seriously and determined to support the development of improved animal care and control services at whatever level, The HSUS intervened in a number of local and regional contexts. In August 1959, for example, Fred Myers and Director of Organization Albert B. Lawson, Jr., collaborated with the commissioners of three southern Maryland counties to develop plans for a new animal shelter and animal control program for a region that had none. The three counties (Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary’s) committed $50,000 to the construction of a shelter in Hughesville, Maryland, with ambulance trucks and advanced equipment and agreed to pay the new society $24,000 to cover operations in its first year. Incorporators of The Humane Society of Southern Maryland included Myers, Service Department Director John Miles Zucker, and HSUS director and benefactor Elsa Voss. In 1962 Myers offered to provide similar assistance for the construction of a proper animal shelter in the nation’s capital, offering to commit The HSUS to a $250,000 fundraising campaign for the project.

In several emergency situations, created through death, dereliction of duty, or corruption, HSUS staff members also stepped in to manage local facilities. In 1962 Director of Affiliates Philip T. Colwell temporarily took charge of the Champaign County Humane Society in Illinois after the untimely death of its principal officer. The following year The HSUS assumed provisional control of the Camden, New Jersey, pound in the aftermath of a scandal surrounding the illegal sale of animals to a

In 1958 fans of the comic strip Peanuts learned the facts about dog and cat overpopulation from Snoopy, who quoted an HSUS brochure.
wholesale dog dealer who supplied them to medical school and pharmaceutical company laboratories.7

Animal destruction and euthanasia practices also received early scrutiny from The HSUS. In 1958, acting in his capacity as a representative of a Maryland humane society, Fred Myers swore out a complaint against the dog warden of Rockville for firing four pistol shots into a dog and allowing the animal’s suffering to continue for thirty minutes until county police officers came and ended the animal’s agony with a single bullet. Less than one year later, The HSUS persuaded officials at the District of Columbia pound to abandon a carbon monoxide euthanasia chamber in favor of sodium pentobarbital administered by a city veterinarian. In the spring of 1960, The HSUS successfully petitioned to enjoin the public shooting of dogs on the streets of Lorain County, Ohio.8

The identification of the most humane methods of euthanasia was a steady priority in the early years. The HSUS’s Committee to Study Euthanasia Methods investigated technologies used by the meatpacking industry as part of efforts to identify potential methods of destroying companion animals painlessly. In February 1961 John Miles Zucker, by then director of branches and affiliates, contacted a hog slaughtering plant for information on carbon dioxide, used to anesthetize animals before slaughter, to see whether it might be used as an active agent in a euthanasia system. In June 1961 The HSUS purchased an Electrothanator, an electrical cabinet that had been widely adopted in Great Britain. This device relied on electrical current, passed first through the brain and then through the body, to destroy animals. Myers had it installed at a shelter operated by the Southern Maryland Humane Society. In 1963 Lewis Timberlake corresponded with a manufacturer about other electrocution units that might be adapted for euthanasia.9

At about the same time, The HSUS commissioned the development of a mobile euthanasia unit. It took a van equipped with an Electrothanator (which Fred Myers usually called an “electrical euthanasia” device) for demonstration to local societies and pounds. Frank McMahon drove the van all around the country, sharing his knowledge with shelter workers.10

The selection of euthanasia methods by the shelters actually operated by The HSUS in its early years suggests the pace of its decision to endorse sodium pentobarbital as the best method of euthanasia. In January 1963, when Frantz Dantzler first began working at the Boulder County Humane Society, a special affiliate of The HSUS, the organization employed water-cooled, filtered carbon monoxide in its shelter. When Dantzler moved to Salt Lake City the following year to assume the position of supervisor at the shelter operated by The HSUS’s Utah State branch, he discovered that sodium pentobarbital was well established as the euthanasia method of choice. The branch had already tried and discarded an Electrothanator, which Dantzler remembered seeing in a storage area.11

In the early- to mid-1960s, much of The HSUS’s outreach on companion animal control concerns fell to Director of Field Services Frank McMahon and to field representatives working with him. Together, staff members presented comprehensive workshops under the sponsorship of local humane societies, reviewing equipment, handling procedures, shelter and pound upkeep, animal control practices, ordinances, contract negotiation, and public relations. Through these events, The HSUS was able to directly influence the abandonment of gunshot euthanasia and/or the replacement of antiquated destruction chambers with newer methods.12

During this same era, The HSUS established an affiliates’ program, certifying humane so-

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Ohio State Senator Charles J. Carney (left) accepts the annual Fred Myers Humane Award from Paul E. Stevens, general counsel for the Youngstown (Ohio) Animal Charity League, an HSUS Affiliate, in the 1960s.

Frank McMahon drove The HSUS’s mobile euthanasia unit (here in Washington, D.C.) around the country for demonstration to local shelters and pounds.
cities that met approved standards of policy and program, allowing them to represent its interests in addressing specific animal control problems in their localities, and collaborating closely with them in investigations, raids, and other endeavors. The HSUS also made available an “economy shelter” kit, with full blueprint plans and specifications, to enable the construction of basic facilities wherever they might be needed. Several of these were built.

Some of the earliest audiovisual products sponsored by The HSUS sought to enhance the reputation of local animal control agencies and to raise the level of appreciation for their work. A few months before his death in 1963, Fred Myers contracted for a motion picture script “aimed at putting across the theme that ‘good humane societies make better communities.’” The following year The HSUS produced a twenty-one-minute film, Help at Hand, that emphasized humane education programs, animal rescue, and adoption services and described the challenges of dealing with animal control ordinances, surplus animal breeding, and cruelty investigation. Several years later another film, My Dog, the Teacher, financed by ALPO and featuring HSUS President Oliver Evans, tracked the story of a partially deaf boy who learns humane values through his adopted beagle puppy. At the same time, it depicted the transformation of a badly operated municipal pound into a properly run animal shelter.

Waterford and the National Humane Education Center
Fred Myers had longed to create a center for humane education and training, one that would include a shelter operation. With the promised support of two HSUS stalwarts, HSUS director Edith Goode and Alice Morgan Wright, the organization moved toward realization of Myers’s dream. In 1963 Goode and Wright donated a 140-acre farm in Loudoun County, Virginia, to The HSUS. After its development in 1965, it became the National Humane Education Center (NHEC), complete with demonstration animal shelter and other training facilities. The original vision of the sponsors centered on a model shelter that would serve as a training center for the care, housing, and euthanasia of animals. Staff members and supporters hoped that the shelter would demonstrate the superiority of certain practices, like the free housing of cats, twenty-four-hour outdoor access, and the use of sodium pentobarbital.

With the development of the Waterford facility, The HSUS became directly involved in Loudoun County’s animal control work, as the NHEC accepted animals taken up by local dog wardens. In its first two years of operation, the Waterford facility spayed or neutered 2,467 cats and dogs, at a subsidized rate for area residents who could not afford standard veterinary fees. During the period 1969–1972, the Waterford clinic performed almost five thousand spay and neuter operations.

Dale Hylton and Phyllis Wright (then at the Washington Animal Rescue League) served with various HSUS directors on a committee to investigate suitable methods of euthanasia for Waterford and other facilities. In time the group concluded that the Electrothanator was not appropriate for use under any circumstances, and discussions of its viability directly shaped The HSUS’s longstanding policy that euthanasia methods that either obviously traumatized animals or...
left any doubt in the mind of a human attendant or observer that it was painless could not be recommended. Euthanasia was already well recognized as the leading cause of employee “burn-out” or “compassion fatigue” in animal shelter operations.18

The Waterford facility did have a Euthanaire decompression chamber, but, while it was shown to students and its operating concept was explained to them, it was not used for any actual euthanasia work. Although it planned to have one on the premises, The HSUS specifically did not contract for construction of a carbon monoxide euthanasia chamber by outside parties, since it was determined “to demonstrate (right from the outset) the practicality and feasibility of having it developed by local talent.” Hylton conscripted his secretary’s husband to locate an automobile engine, water tank, and gas filtration system, which they then used to build a euthanasia chamber. This unit, too, was used for training purposes, not for actual euthanasia.19

During its relatively short life span, The HSUS’s Waterford animal shelter was responsible for a number of innovations. The HSUS also devised a limited-contract arrangement with a local veterinarian, who came by the shelter regularly to address any problems of illness noticed by staff.20

Together with Mel Morse, who made regular visits during his brief tenure as HSUS president, Hylton also made Waterford (the first shelter ever to his knowledge) require neutering of male dogs. The shelter had already moved to require spaying of all female cats and dogs and neutering of male cats. Early in the Waterford years, the new policy led to a memorable episode. One day a dog warden brought in a fine-looking black Labrador. Hylton decided to keep the dog around for longer than the prescribed holding period but eventually neutered him and adopted him out to a retired couple. About a month later, a farmer came around looking for a valuable stud dog who had gotten away from him some weeks before—the very dog, as it turned out, neutered by clinic professionals a few weeks earlier. Before the man could act upon his anger, however, his children found a scruffy-looking collie they wanted to take home with them.21

Whatever its impact as an animal shelter, as a training program, the Waterford initiative proved to be ineffectual. An insufficient number of humane society employees from other parts of the country were ready or able to travel to Virginia. Within a few years, moreover, the animal control program at Waterford quickly began to absorb staff and funding resources that might otherwise have gone toward addressing the problems of cruelty at a national level. Key administrators and board members began to question the wisdom and propriety of The HSUS’s management and subsidy of an essentially local animal shelter, even in its home region. Although some board and staff members dissented, feeling that Waterford had unmet potential that—with stronger programmatic and fund-raising commitments—could still be realized, their view did not carry the day. The HSUS discontinued the shelter, which it had been subsidizing at the rate of $50,000 per year. Plans to convert the property into a nature center did not materialize, and, finally, in 1974 the HSUS Board of Directors voted to sell the property and its shelter facility. Loudoun County, Virginia, acquired the land and buildings, which became the center of county animal control operations.22

While it had not fulfilled original expectations, Waterford was by no means a failure, for it was there that staff members like Dale Hylton expanded their knowledge of and experience with appropriate shelter operations, gaining insights that they would share with countless other animal care workers in the years to follow. The Waterford experience proved to be useful when The HSUS moved in the direction of sponsoring workshops on shelter management and operation around the country in the 1970s.

**The Professionalization of Animal Care and Control**

For two decades the mainspring of The HSUS’s programs in companion animal care was Phyllis Wright, who had run a boarding kennel, taught dog obedience classes, and operat-
ed several animal shelters in the Washington, D.C., area after serving as chief of
dog training for the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Wright joined the staff of
The HSUS in January 1969, and by 1975 she was The HSUS’s chief liaison with
the animal sheltering community. For a time she even had her own television
show in the Washington, D.C., market. Under Wright’s legendary leadership, The
HSUS consistently articulated the differences between itself and other organiza-
tions regarding euthanasia, spay-neuter, shelter management, veterinary
care, and related issues.23

Wright’s “pull no punches” approach made her one of the most
quotable HSUS officials. “We are striving to put ourselves out of busi-
ness,” she told one audience. “Until that happens, when there is no
longer a cruelty or overpopulation problem, I intend to continue in-
specting every shelter in this country and to help them provide the best
care possible for the animals.” On another occasion, at a humane so-
ciety banquet in North Carolina, she declared, “The animal facility in
this county is not fit for a dog.”24

While Wright was alive, the nation’s animal shelters had no
greater defender or advocate. She was a stern critic of uninformed
disparagement or disapproval of individual shelters and their prac-
tices. At the same time, Wright believed that there were some criti-
cisms that all good animal shelters had to heed, and she was not
afraid to pose the question, “How humane is your society?” Wright
liked to tease workshop participants with the admonition, “You might as well tell me what
you’ve been doing [wrong], because if you don’t, someone else in this business will.”25

By 1969, the year Wright joined The HSUS, the crisis of cat and dog overpopulation in
the United States was reaching its worst proportions. The increasing popularity of keeping an-
imals had given rise to an entire industry of pet-related enterprises, including mass breeders
who serviced pet store chains with utter indifference to the mounting numbers of homeless
and unwanted animals. These new ventures exacerbated the challenges that animal care
and control organizations had to confront by driving the population of surplus animals to
new heights.26 By 1971 The HSUS estimated that, collectively, private charities and public fa-
cilities were expending approximately half a billion dollars annually on the euthanasia of un-
wanted dogs and cats. Several years later an HSUS survey placed the number of dogs and
cats killed annually in American shelters at 13.5 million.27

The HSUS consistently pushed spay-neuter programs during this era, with public service
advertisements, support for subsidized or lowered-fee programs, and other public outreach
measures. Everyone involved with the problem at the national level, however, knew that it
would take much more to bring the situation under control, and The HSUS began to investi-
gate stronger and more comprehensive approaches. This search led inevitably to heightened
scrutiny of the nation’s weak animal control laws, which, historically, had imposed nominal
licensing fees and had operated with inadequate enforcement mechanisms.28

In 1973 the National League of Cities identified the proliferation of dogs, cats, and their
waste as a threat to public health as well as “an assault on urban aesthetics, a pollutant, and
a safety hazard.” In some cities there were packs of stray and feral animals running at large.
Yet local governments, despite their concern, usually refused to provide adequate funding to
animal control operations, public education, and other useful measures. One of the most se-
rious problems animal care and control agencies faced nationwide was the ineffectual sup-
port they generally received from the municipalities in which they were active. The HSUS
sought to position itself as a catalyst for change and a source of rock-solid data on animal-re-
lated problems, and staff members hoped to fortify local efforts to secure increased munici-
pal support and funding. In 1977, for example, Guy Hodge authored The Reign of Dogs and

PROTECTING ALL ANIMALS: A FIFTY-YEAR HISTORY OF THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
Cats, a special report on contemporary approaches to animal control, for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), as part of an outreach program to municipal managers. It was the first of four HSUS-authored, ICMA-published reports.29

Efforts to revamp animal control programs around the country coalesced under the approach that Phyllis Wright designated as LES—legislation, education, and sterilization. The HSUS promoted adequate licensing fees, broad community education, and sterilization programs. Under the influence of “Doc” Thomsen, The HSUS began to promote local ordinances that relied on enforcement of responsible pet ownership rather than on public persuasion. The growing conviction that effective animal control ordinances were the only realistic means for ending the surplus of companion animals underpinned the staging of national conferences in 1974 and 1976. The latter event produced a model ordinance that The HSUS circulated widely.30

Basic to the animal control ordinance backed by The HSUS were requirements that dogs and cats be licensed, with tags affixed to their collars; that there be a differential licensing arrangement for intact and neutered animals; that animals be kept under control at all times; that breeders be subject to licensing and regulation; that animals adopted from public and private shelters be sterilized; and that there be a tracking system to facilitate the immediate return of free-roaming animals whose owners could be identified.31

Even as animal care and control workers around the country confronted the escalating surplus of unwanted animals, The HSUS sought to extend its efforts to promote professionalism in philosophy and practice. The affiliates program, designed to forge links between The HSUS and local animal welfare organizations, rested upon the willingness of those groups to accept HSUS policy on animal welfare issues as well as their adherence to standards of program and sheltering procedure. However, the program received little attention after 1968, in part because the integrity of most local operations rested mainly upon a handful of key personnel. Once those people moved on to other organizations or agencies, there was no guarantee that the societies would continue to be run properly.

In 1974 The HSUS launched an accreditation program that encompassed several of the goals that had driven the affiliates system. Using well-developed criteria for the evaluation of animal welfare and animal control organizations, the accreditation process recognized quality animal care, humane education, sensible animal control, professional investigation methods, responsible administrative practices, and outstanding public relations capacities. The HSUS issued accreditation certificates to animal shelters to encourage higher standards for animal welfare and control practices, to develop lines of communication between organizations and agencies working in the field, and to promote greater public respect and support for professional and responsible operation. The program also involved an annual reaccreditation process.32

As part of its outreach to local shelters throughout the country, The HSUS staged traveling leadership workshops, “Solving Animal Problems in Your Community.” Each of these two- and three-day events, which began in 1971, drew at least 100 registrants to participate in sessions on public relations and humane education outreach, adoption standards and procedures, euthanasia methods, cruelty investigations, and the philosophy and strategy of animal control programs. The workshops not only helped The HSUS to forge ties with local societies, but they also strengthened the relations among organizations in a specific region. Wright liked to involve local humane workers where appropriate and usually set time aside for their direct participation, but the program almost always included...
HSUS personnel like John Hoyt, investigator Frantz Dantzler, and education specialists John Dommers, Charles Herrmann, and Kathy Savesky. Regional office staff members were often important participants in the workshops, too, and frequently handled preliminary preparations and promotional efforts.

The workshops offered at these events changed with the field itself. In the early years, they focused on how to clean a shelter or how to conduct cruelty investigations. They subsequently expanded to include sessions highlighting new developments in rabies control, the handling of wildlife, and the use of information technology. The conferences also featured experts, such as former prosecutors and state health department personnel. Finally, the conferences helped to relieve the sense of isolation that wore so heavily upon shelter workers.

In 1979 The HSUS enhanced its educational capacities in the realm of companion animal care by launching an Animal Control Academy in conjunction with the University of Alabama. There, under the direction of William Hurt Smith, instructors helped to train law enforcement and humane society personnel in proper methods of investigation, shelter operation, animal care, and euthanasia. By the end of 1983, the Academy had produced eighty-two graduates.

By that year Phyllis Wright’s HSUS area of oversight had also taken on its modern appearance. In 1977 Wright’s title was director of the department of animal sheltering and control. Six years later, the section she oversaw was known as Companion Animals, and its responsibilities included the operation of the Animal Control Academy and the Accreditation Program and the publication of Shelter Sense ten times a year. Three staff members conducted on-site evaluations of animal control and humane society operations, visiting approximately fifty shelters a year. The section’s personnel testified at state and local hearings concerning ordinances and other matters and fielded a broad range of public inquiries.

The signing of a joint statement of agreement on the guiding principles of animal care and sheltering with AHA and the National Animal Control Association in 1985 signaled a new era of cooperation toward the goal of an effective strategy for addressing companion animal overpopulation and other problems. The agreement reflected the organizations’ common belief that the challenges in the field were larger than any one organization, national, regional, or local, could solve and underscored the necessity of cooperation and communication to further progress. All agreed on the need for better public education, professionalization of staff, higher standards of service and practice, improved public health and safety programs, and full support for appropriate legislation and law enforcement work.

Despite the good intentions that motivated its launch in 1974, The HSUS’s accreditation program had its limitations. In ten years of operation, just twenty-two of eighty organizations had succeeded in achieving the rigorous standards in the time required. Many agencies and organizations did not even attempt to apply for accreditation, knowing they could not implement the necessary improvements in a timely way. Personnel changes within societies also hindered the implementation of appropriate policies and practices. Finally, although the shelters paid a nominal fee for the service, it took up a large share of staff time whenever an organization was seeking to be approved. HSUS officials concluded that the program was not properly serving the majority of animal control and sheltering agencies and that it was placing unreasonable burdens upon staff.

Accordingly, in 1985 The HSUS launched its PETS (Professional Education and Training Services) program, to encourage broader participation by organizations seeking to improve their operations. Instead of requiring that specific standards be met, the new program...
emphasized training for executive directors and shelter managers. Once these individuals successfully completed the training, their organizations were given an opportunity to commit themselves to professional standards established by The HSUS. The new program emphasized the professionalism and development of staff members rather than the accomplishments of organizations and agencies.39

In subsequent years, The HSUS sought to assist local shelters to improve their work through its “E- [for Evaluation] Team” and then, after 1999, its Animal Services Consultation (ASC) program. The ASC involved HSUS staff specialists and outside professionals in a full-service review and audit of a given animal care or control agency’s operations and practices. The consultation involved extensive preliminary assessments based on documentary records and data and consultation with key personnel to establish the agency or organization’s expressed needs and objectives. After completing its review, including an on-site visit, the HSUS team provided its client with an evaluation report that examined its operations within a broad context, taking into account dozens of variable and contingent factors that can affect the fortunes of an animal care or control organization. In some cases, the ASC report could become a central strategic document for the entity’s future development.40

In 1991 The HSUS launched Animal Care Expo, which quickly became an annual responsibility for the Companion Animals section, by 1996 under the leadership of one of Phyllis Wright’s most accomplished protégés, Martha Armstrong. An international event, part trade show, part educational conference, Expo generally drew at least one thousand participants and several hundred exhibitors every year. The HSUS offered certificate courses and workshops on a wide range of topics, while allowing participants ample opportunity for networking and the examination of new animal products in the exhibit halls.41

In 1999 The HSUS initiated a new program for the training and education of shelter professionals, designed to avoid and eliminate the deficiencies of the certification and accreditation approach. The Pets for Life National Training Center, run in partnership with the Dumb Friends League of Denver, Colorado, now became an important part of the Companion Animals section’s ongoing commitment to professional training for animal care and control personnel. Through Pets for Life, shelter staff could learn how to improve and implement behavior modification programs in their shelters. Students also received instruction in how to operate a behavior assistance and training program in their own communities. As of winter 2003, more than three hundred shelter employees from 210 shelters in fifty states, Canada, and Hong Kong had completed the program. By then, too, The HSUS had taken the Pets for Life training program on the road, launching regional training centers to provide assistance to shelter personnel across the country.42

The Challenges of Spay-Neuter
In the early 1960s, The HSUS shifted its emphasis from simply discouraging surplus breeding of animals through restraint and quarantine during their seasons of heat—the basic advice that circulated through the 1950s—to a more aggressive program of promoting spay-neuter as the solution to companion animal overpopulation. With lingering medical concerns about the effect of organ removal upon animals resolved, with the surgical option more widely available through veterinarians and sometimes at shelters and clinics, and with people increasingly disposed to spend more money on taking care of their animals, it became a more realistic and effective proposition to advance. Under the circumstances, it was ironic that, once the humane movement began to introduce its own spay-neuter clinics and subsidy pro-
grams, it would find its greatest and most tenacious opponent to be the veterinary profession. Even in the face of such antagonism, The HSUS and many local societies pushed for laws to require spaying and neutering of animals adopted from their facilities or for differential licensing arrangements that charged higher fees for unaltered animals. “We are in competition with the euthanasia room, not the veterinarians,” Phyllis Wright emphasized.43

The hostility of veterinarians to subsidized spay-neuter programs lasted for decades, and it was one of the reasons that federal legislation to provide low-interest loans for the construction and launch of municipal spay-neuter clinics went nowhere. While the issue pitted concern for the prevention and suffering of unwanted animals against the claimed privileges of private enterprise, institutional prerogatives, and professional qualifications, veterinarians’ major accusation was that subsidy programs constituted a form of unfair competition. At its most shrill, the veterinary community denounced subsidized spay-neuter as “the first step in socialized medicine.” At other times representatives belittled the impact of spay-neuter on the overall problem of animal overpopulation. These fights lasted into the 1980s and 1990s, with crucial decisions handed down in Louisiana, Michigan, and Virginia.44

The opposition from professional veterinary authorities proved to be troubling, as they even sought to prevent individual practitioners from cooperating with lowered-fee or subsidized spay-neuter initiatives. In 1974 a ruling by Ohio’s attorney general on the legality of humane organizations’ providing subsidies for spay-neuter conducted by veterinarians found that such activity did not constitute solicitation of business on behalf of those veterinarians (Opinion no. 74064). The opinion concerns a program launched by HSUS founder Larry Andrews through his organization, United Humanitarians. Veterinarians who had agreed to cooperate with the program were threatened with loss of licenses on the ground that humane groups offering this subsidy were “soliciting business” in violation of the state’s veterinary medical practices act.45

However, in October 1984 the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) ruled that the Michigan Humane Society’s three full-service veterinary clinics comprised an essential part of its charitable, humane activities and did not constitute a trade or business. The IRS made a similarly encouraging determination in regard to a spay-neuter clinic operated by the Humane Society of Huron Valley, accepting the premise that the control of animal overpopulation through spay-neuter work did prevent cruelty to animals and thus did constitute a charitable activity. In this decision, HSUS attorneys reported, the IRS also diverged from the earlier understanding that “charitable veterinary services must be limited to treating stray, abused, or abandoned animals, or the animals of indigent owners.” The decision seemed to recognize that responding to any animal’s medical needs, regardless of whether that animal has a human being responsible for it or is able or willing to pay for services, is inherently charitable. Michigan veterinarians made a fight of it, getting legislation introduced in the state legislature to suppress full-service clinics operated by humane societies.46

In 1986 the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) asked the U.S. Congress to impose taxes upon nonprofit organizations that operated any form of business not directly tied to their mission. The specified business activities included spay-neuter surgeries and vaccinations at humane society-operated clinics. The next year John Hoyt was one of the humane advocates who testified before a subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee in support of tax-exempt status for charitable hospitals and spay-neuter clinics. Fortunately, the committee took no action.47

Spay-neuter was not the only option pursued by those concerned with controlling the population of unwanted animals. Not surprisingly, the era of the pill and the sexual revolu-
tion produced a new alternative to surgical sterilization. Since the late 1950s, The HSUS had followed scientific reports of investigations into chemical sterilization, like those conducted by Leon F. Whitney, D.V.M., at Yale University. Whitney’s study of Malucidin, a yeast extract that caused the reabsorption of embryos, provided an early sign of the potential of such approaches.48

By 1970 a number of pet food and drug manufacturers were engaged in research toward the development of a drug to prevent estrus or conception if estrus occurred. Corporate giants Upjohn and Ralston-Purina were aware of the potential market for safe and effective chemosterilants but could not seem to overcome the obstacles, which included the necessity of daily administration, adverse medical effects, genetic damage, trans-species differentiation, and FDA concerns about human consumption of pet food. The search for reproductive inhibitors was also frustrated by other obstacles and mishaps. A federal program that developed one such inhibitor for use in deer populations abandoned the work when a hunter’s wife who had eaten deer meat complained of a miscarriage.49

Veterinary medicine was also lukewarm on the shift toward chemosterilant alternatives, because spay-neuter operations generated a portion of individuals’ incomes within the profession. Veterinarians believed (probably incorrectly) that a shift toward alternatives would have resulted in a significant reduction if not elimination of income from this practice, although it was well known that the profit margins on vaccines and other injectable drugs was higher than those attached to surgery. For their part, humane officials worried that, once scientists had successfully developed a one-time injectable that safely and permanently sterilized animals, the organized veterinary community would do its best to persuade state officials that only veterinarians could be authorized to provide the shots, a concern amply vindicated by subsequent experience.50

After The HSUS launched ISAP in the mid-1970s, a study of chemical birth control for animals was an early priority. Mel Morse, one of ISAP’s founders, was in regular contact with corporations working on implants and other methods. When Michael Fox became ISAP director in 1976, The HSUS launched a serious review of the possibilities of chemosterilization in the male dog.51

For a time, with generous support from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The HSUS donated some funds to the research of Colorado State University’s Lloyd Faulkner concerning chemical sterilants for male dogs. Faulkner was investigating contraceptive implants and a vaccine immunization that inhibited reproductive function. The animal health products division of at least one major pharmaceutical firm was also conducting research on vaccine compounds. But sterilants did not become the panacea that scientific professionals had asserted, and chemical vasectomy remained an elusive goal. The search for the “silver bullet” continued, however, and in 2003, almost forty-five years after the first mention of such a product in HSUS News, the FDA approved the chemosterilant Neutersol for use in male dogs between three and ten months old.52

As The HSUS continued to monitor developments in the field, the Companion Animals section developed a list of characteristics that a chemo- or immunosterilant must have to constitute a genuine alternative to surgical spay-neuter for shelters and in animal population control efforts in developing nations, where The HSUS and its international affiliate, HSI, were becoming more involved. According to the document, the sterilant must not cause harmful or unpleasant side effects; must be administrable without the need for anesthesia; must not require repeated injections and/or boosters; and must cause permanent sterility in animals.53
Euthanasia

Throughout its history The HSUS has framed the euthanasia of unwanted animals as an unfortunate aspect of a problem whose resolution required a more comprehensive solution. While acknowledging the unavoidability of euthanasia as a response to companion animal overpopulation, The HSUS has insisted on the identification and adoption of the most compassionate options available. In The HSUS’s first several decades, staff members confronted the problem of crude, inefficient, and cruel methods of destroying animals in local shelters, called for research into new approaches, and pushed for comparative studies of extant alternatives. The organization was an early critic of mechanical means of animal destruction, such as chambers in which gas, electricity, or rapid decompression were used to euthanize unwanted animals as well as such crude methods of killing as strychnine, drowning, and gunshot. The HSUS also played an instrumental role in the shift toward lethal injection by trained and caring personnel as the standard means of euthanasia in well-managed shelters and animal care facilities.\(^\text{54}\)

Euthanasia of surplus animal populations in the United States dates from the 1870s, when the nation’s first shelter substituted the use of carbonous oxide gas for drowning and clubbing of animals by mid-nineteenth-century municipal agents. Sadly, the options available remained much the same for the next ninety years, and when The HSUS formed, humane societies were choosing among a limited range of methods that included electrocution, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, cyanide, and nitrogen. Over the years, the cruelties and deficiencies of each of these methods became manifest. Nevertheless, animal care and control organizations continued to rely upon them, as convenience, lack of capital, and other factors ensured their survival into the modern era.

For years The HSUS responded to persistent requests for investigations and inquiries concerning euthanasia practices and related abuses at pounds and shelters around the country. In 1967 Dale Hylton traveled to Brownsville, Texas, to assist HSUS member Evelyn Yates in her campaign to replace a crude, makeshift carbon monoxide shed in use at the city pound. Attendants piped in exhaust fumes—unfiltered and uncooled—from a truck, and the inefficiencies of the structure prolonged the animals’ painful death.\(^\text{55}\)

On another occasion Hylton went to visit a municipal pound near Asheville, North Carolina, during an investigative tour of other southern states. Discovering that the local health department and its contractor had failed to follow plans provided by The HSUS for a chamber that used cooled and filtered carbon monoxide gas, Hylton worked with local humane advocates to lobby county supervisors for an immediate halt to construction. As a result, the county board contracted with another local firm to build a chamber that conformed to HSUS specifications.\(^\text{56}\)

The HSUS even went so far as to sue local governments in an effort to force the adoption of appropriate means of destroying animals. In 1972 a review of euthanasia practices at the San Antonio, Texas, pound led to a lawsuit, when HSUS staff members noted that it sometimes took as long as an hour for animals to die in the facility’s gas chamber. “If you can’t kill an animal in two minutes, then don’t call it euthanasia. Call it slaughter—call it anything you want, but don’t call it euthanasia,” Phyllis Wright commented.\(^\text{57}\)

By the early 1970s, controversy over the decompression chamber dominated discussions of euthanasia. The high-altitude, low-pressure chamber was a widely adopted technological spin-off from Air Force research concerning the physical reaction of pilots and others to rapid decompression. Decompression destroyed animals by reducing the oxygen content in the chamber.
through an exhaust pump, creating a near vacuum. For many years, this method had strong defenders within the humane community. It was in broad general use, and before 1957 it even enjoyed the approval of The HSUS. The decompression chamber could be operated without much training by nonveterinary personnel and could euthanize several animals at a time. Over time, however, it began to attract greater scrutiny and disapproval, and critics argued that animals suffocated and experienced loss of lung tissue and excruciating pain as a result of the pressure change.58

The HSUS was one of the earliest, if not the first, major critic of the decompression method. However, “Doc” Thomsen’s searching analysis of the rapid decompression chamber in 1972 was a benchmark in the effort to abolish its use, bringing together a broad range of facts and findings that helped to substantiate doubts about the method’s humaneness. Thomsen spoke for many in the field when he observed, “Intense pain for even a very short time should not be tolerated by humanitarians if there is any alternative.”59

Executive Vice President Mel Morse, with forty years of experience in the movement, helped to focus The HSUS’s response to the issue. Morse was familiar with virtually all methods in use and had unparalleled knowledge of the numerous factors infusing the debate. While convinced that decompression was not humane, Morse insisted that The HSUS needed to come up with a strong alternative. If not, he cautioned, “people will go back to using the old monoxide truck backing up to a tank type of thing.” Morse also underscored the importance of striking a balance between humaneness to animals and safety for the operator. Discussions Morse held with HSUS attorney Murdaugh Madden resulted in the selection of euthanasia technologies as a suitable topic for investigation by ISAP, then being planned. In 1972 The HSUS put money toward serious evaluations of the decompression chamber and the nitrogen flushing chamber as an alternative. This inquiry collapsed, a casualty of movement politics, John Hoyt thought. However, The HSUS was already focusing on sodium pentobarbital as the best and most humane method in sight. Nevertheless, it, too, presented a problem. As a barbiturate, it was a controlled substance under federal law, and that presented substantial obstacles to its use. Madden thought that scientific analysis of the options would help the case: “The more data we have the more we can push for sodium pentobarbital to be approved for widespread usage.”60

On this as on many animal welfare issues, organized animal protection was ahead of the veterinary community. In 1962 an AVMA panel withheld its approval of decompression, acknowledging the “serious objection” that animals may suffer excruciating pain for a short time. In 1972, however, a second panel judged the method “humane” and recommended it as satisfactory, “provided the equipment is properly constructed, maintained, and operated.” Finally, in 1978 a third AVMA panel, citing general lack of understanding of decompression’s physiological effects, stated that “other methods of euthanasia are preferable.” Nevertheless, the 1978 panel proclaimed rapid decompression a “satisfactory procedure for euthanasia.”61

The grassroots campaign against decompression got off to a dramatic start in 1971, when Florida opponents of the chamber actually stole a unit from one humane society. Legislative initiatives to prohibit its use followed in subsequent years, and in 1976 Arizona and Massachusetts became the first states to ban the chamber. Phyllis Wright, Michael Fox, and other HSUS personnel testified before state legislatures and community councils in several campaigns. The HSUS celebrated John Kullberg’s decision to drop use of the decompression chamber at the ASPCA once he became that organization’s president in 1978. Further opposition to its use resulted in a prohibition on use of the decompression chamber in twenty-eight states by the end of the 1980s.62

Sodium pentobarbital was not the only method proposed as a substitute for decompression. T-61 and Succostrin frequently surfaced in discussions of the topic, too. T-61 was a compound that comprised a fast-acting local anesthetic to minimize the pain of injection, a narcotic agent designed to produce loss of consciousness and paralysis of the respiratory appar...
ratus, and a curariform drug that exerted a strong paralytic effect and induced circulatory col-

collapse. T-61 was introduced in Europe in the early 1960s, but it did not enjoy widespread use

in the United States until the 1970s. At that time, surveys indicated its increasing adoption as

a euthanasia agent. One perceived advantage was that it did not present the same amount of

red tape and difficulty of acquisition that attended sodium pentobarbital.63

Succostrin (succinylcholine chloride)—another curare-like drug—produced death by im-

mobilizing the respiratory organs, causing fatal suffocation. However, since it exerted no depres-
sant action on the brain, an animal would suffer severe pain without even being able to com-
municate that suffering. After Michael Fox became director of ISAP in 1976, The HSUS intensified
its warnings about the hazards and inhumane use of Succostrin and T-61 for euthanasia.64

By the mid-1970s, The HSUS was leading the push for universal adoption of barbiturates

like sodium pentobarbital for euthanasia. This solution posed some challenges, because laws

had to be altered to permit humane societies to purchase barbiturates and lay personnel to

administer them. The injection method minimized potential for error but brought technicians

into close contact with the animals they euthanized and placed unusually heavy emotional

burdens upon the individuals charged with responsibility for the task. For this reason sessions

on the emotional dimensions of euthanasia work were crucial elements in the training pro-
gram of the Animal Control Academy, founded just as the shift toward sodium pentobarbital

gathered momentum. While The HSUS’s training programs acknowledged that providing a

physically painless death could be a psychologically painful experience for technicians

charged with carrying out euthanasia, the organization strongly endorsed methods that re-
quired close contact with the animals. The Companion Animals section sought to develop

consensus that euthanasia methods be dignified as well as humane, that equipment be proper-
ly maintained, and that those responsible for euthanasia be suitably trained.65

**Pet Shops and Puppy Mills**

Breeding and supply for the pet industry market has long been an issue of concern to The

HSUS. The routine sale of sick animals by pet stores emerged as a serious concern in the mid-

1960s. In Washington, D.C., during the Christmas holiday season in 1966, an estimated fifty to

seventy-five dogs sold in pet stores had to be euthanized due to illness. The HSUS testified at

a hearing by the District of Columbia commissioners on the matter and pointed out that pet

stores in the nation’s capital, virtually unregulated in comparison to those in other communi-

ties, exhibited some of the most unsanitary and inadequate conditions in the country.66 In

1967 a California pet wholesaler sued The HSUS after its California branch confiscated ani-
mals from him.67

The HSUS also supported state-level legislation to restrict retail sales of household pets by

individuals and stores for which it was not a principal business. Such legislation targeted va-

riety stores and other outlets that used such marketing as a gimmick or an impetus to increase

sales volume. The HSUS argued that employees of such stores were almost always unquali-
fied in the humane care and treatment of animals. As part of the broader campaign to restrict

such commerce, Frank McMahon persuaded Sears to abandon its plan to sell dogs.68

Both the national office and branches sought to prohibit the sale of baby animals for the

holiday entertainment of children, a common practice at Easter. There were many cruelties at-
tached to this practice, and nearly all of the chicks, rabbits, ducklings, and other animals died

shortly after the holiday from improper nutrition, starvation, abuse, overhandling, or plain neg-
lect. In 1965 members of the California branch picketed a discount store that was giving away

15,000 baby chicks, in an effort to drum up support for prohibitive legislation. The HSUS pro-
vided a model ordinance to campaigners and assembled medical data establishing a link be-
tween salmonella infection and animals sold in the Easter trade, based on U.S. Public Health
Service surveys from half a dozen states and individual doctors’ reports. By 1966 eleven states

and more than one hundred communities had enacted legislation to outlaw the trade.69
The HSUS was sometimes successful in persuading government agencies to ban the sale of other animals. In 1975, after a year-long campaign waged by The HSUS and Consumers Union, the FDA restricted the sale of turtles after they proved to be transmitters of infectious salmonella to children. But five years later, turtle sales continued in some states, and pet shops and dealers marketed them with impunity.70

HSUS officials used the description, "puppy mill," as early as 1965, when they participated in the arrest of Joseph P. O'Neill, a Princeton, New Jersey, kennel operator, for cruelty to animals. O'Neill's operation purchased puppies from all over the country and then advertised purebreds for sale in leading newspapers. O'Neill pled guilty to charges of cruelty in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, after Frank McMahon and a local humane agent kept him under continuous observation for almost twenty-four hours while he picked up puppies in four Pennsylvania communities. During that time O'Neill provided no food, water, or attention to the animals in his truck.71

In time the term "puppy mill" came to describe certain commercial dog-breeding establishments selling wholesale to the pet industry. The HSUS pushed to see amendments made to the AWA in 1970 that required all such businesses to be licensed and inspected regularly. In 1974 The HSUS held conversations with pet shop industry representatives about the viability of self-regulation by the industry. At that time the American Kennel Club (AKC) reported about 2,500 complaints yearly against pet shops. Concerns included the buyers' inability to obtain papers for purebred animals they purchased, the condition or health of the animals, and the sellers' determined resistance to return or replacement.72

Despite these efforts, unfortunately, puppy mills flourished during the 1970s. In those years America's heartland—its Midwestern states—also became known for harboring substandard mass breeding operations that produced purebred animals wholesale for the pet store market. Concentrated in rural areas where land was cheap and pet food an easily available by-product of livestock agriculture, puppy mills gained popularity as a "second crop" for many farmers, with the encouragement of USDA. In 1977 nearly three thousand of the nation's six thousand animal dealers lived in Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas.73

During the mid-1970s, HSUS investigators Ann Gonnerman and Frantz Dantzler went into the field to document the deplorable conditions of Midwestern puppy farms. Their work provided background for Roger Caras's 1976 feature report on puppy mills for ABC-TV News. Some of the worst facilities they visited had received USDA licensure, a fact that badly undercut efforts to prosecute. While Dantzler believed that conditions were so horrendous that on-the-spot arrests for cruelty to animals were warranted, prosecutors faced the challenge of convincing judges and juries that cruelty had occurred in facilities that were "USDA approved."74

In 1980–1981 puppy mills became the subject of an extended investigation by HSUS investigator Bob Baker, who spent five months researching them. "Breeder usually enter the business after hearing of a relative, neighbor, or acquaintance who is earning a substantial income from breeding dogs," Baker explained. He found that even those who were licensed and inspected by USDA agencies were guilty of inhumane practices. 75
amount of money in his or her spare time raising dogs,” Baker reported. “The single most distinguishing characteristic of [puppy mill owners] is their desire to produce puppies at minimum cost with minimum effort, regardless of what is best for the animals. The only apparent concern affecting the dogs’ welfare is their desire for a high enough survival rate to ensure a profit.”

In the case of puppy mills, Baker charged, the AWA simply was not being enforced. Most inspectors were veterinary and animal health professionals who spent the majority of their time looking for brucellosis in cattle, “who considered the enforcement of regulations against dog breeding operations to be an imposition on their work schedules.” Baker found that 44 percent of the facilities surveyed had “chronic and persistent deficiencies as noted by the USDA inspector, and yet no disciplinary action had been initiated.”

A General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation of puppy mills in 1984 confirmed The HSUS’s allegations of major deficiencies in the enforcement of the AWA regulations concerning puppy mills. Very little changed, however, and Representative Manuel Lujan, Jr. (R-NM), led efforts to press USDA to examine its effectiveness in ensuring compliance. The HSUS continued its public awareness efforts, even setting up information booths at AKC events in the 1980s. In 1989 USDA’s Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) formed a new division, the Regulatory Enforcement/Animal Care Program (REAC), to work exclusively on animal welfare concerns, but it accomplished very little on the problem of puppy mills.

In May 1990, after a decade of frustration over the lack of enforcement at all levels, The HSUS launched a nationwide boycott of puppies from the six worst puppy-mill states—Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Iowa, and Nebraska. In time Pennsylvania was added to the list. The goal of the campaign was to spur the states to enforce those animal welfare regulations already in place and to pass appropriate legislation where none existed. Bob Baker appeared on numerous national television programs, and he and Gail Eisnitz took a film crew from ABC’s 20/20 television news magazine to document conditions at a puppy mill owned by a USDA inspector. A decline in pet shop sales of puppies in California, a major market, signaled the positive impact of the boycott. In a few instances, too, the publicity campaign spurred enhanced efforts to enforce the laws.

The publicity campaign also led to renewed action at the federal level. Representative Ben Cardin (D-MD) and a dozen colleagues responded to the HSUS investigation by sponsoring the Puppy Protection Act, H.R. 3718, in November 1991 to provide strong legal recourse to those who purchased animals from pet stores and commercial breeders.

The HSUS’s Legal and Government Affairs staff joined with members of the Companion Animals section in intense efforts to improve the situation in 1994 and 1995. In June 1995 Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) led a signatory campaign in which more than one hundred congressional representatives and senators asked USDA secretary Dan Glickman to protect puppy mill animals. The initiative gained a degree of bipartisan support unmatched by virtually any other animal issue, as elected politicians who had heard so many complaints about puppy mills came forward to sign the letter.

Subsequent regulatory changes failed to impress HSUS staff members who had participated in public meetings and negotiations, however. Santorum and his colleague, Richard Durbin (D-IL), and representatives Sam Farr (D-CA) and Ed Whitfield (R-KY) subsequently introduced the “Puppy Protection Act” to improve USDA enforcement of
The Humane Transport Act

In addition to its obvious adverse impact on the effort to reduce companion animal overpopulation, the rise of the puppy mill industry created other urgent challenges for the humane movement. Chief among these was the terrible conditions under which animals were transported via air. This problem ensued directly from the proliferation of Midwestern puppy mills, and it was no coincidence that Kansas City was “the hub of the nation’s puppy traffic” during the 1970s.

The lack of training of airport workers, and the general indifference of the carriers, resulted in numerous difficulties and sometimes even the death of animals in transport. Many of the consignors were pet shops and puppy mills that showed little concern for animals’ welfare and often shipped dogs in lettuce crates and other substandard containers. Companies like the Railway Express Agency (REA), which was alone responsible for over 90 percent of commercial animal shipments in North America transported animals under a system better suited to freight than to living creatures.

The major airlines, for their part, were eager to compete for a share of the trade and did very little to address the terrible neglect and suffering of animals that was manifest in terminals around the country every day. As Frank McMahon told one reporter, “Airlines have no obligation to give food, water, exercise or periodic inspections to animals, regardless of the length of flight. The problem is complicated by the fact that many air express employees are paid by commission and are therefore willing to accept anything, regardless of the condition of either the animal or the shipping crate.”

Nor were airlines and shippers concerned about the effects of extreme temperatures on animals being shipped. As The HSUS pointed out, airlines were satisfied to let passengers and others believe that animals in baggage compartments were getting the same benefits as peo-
ple traveling in the passenger cabins. Animals on longer flights sometimes suffocated or died of heat exhaustion. There were numerous tragic incidents involving those who had entrusted their companion animals to air carriers. Aggrieved citizens commonly transmitted such stories to The HSUS’s offices.86

The situation was inextricably bound up with the history of the AWA. As passed in 1966, the AWA had established humane standards for the treatment of animals while housed in scientific institutions, on the premises of animal dealers, or in transit. The 1970 revision amended its coverage to include nonlaboratory animals being transported, bought, or sold for “teaching purposes or for use as pets.” But while animal dealers, circuses, zoos, and other exhibitors were now required to meet the AWA standards, there was a loophole that exempted the coverage of animals while they were being transported by common carriers in interstate commerce.87

Representative Lowell Weicker, Jr. (R-CT), introduced a bill in 1970 requiring the humane treatment of animals transported by air and persuaded a Senate colleague to sponsor a companion bill. While this legislation failed, it led to greater interest in the issue. HSUS investigations in Connecticut and Washington, D.C., provided crucial evidence of improper identification, poorly constructed containers, inadequate health certification, and animal injury. The organization also filed a December 1973 petition with the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) requesting positive action to address the situation. A congressional hearing on the matter took place the same year, and in 1974 Representative Thomas Foley (D-WA) introduced amendments to the AWA to assign responsibility for the regulation of animal transport by common carriers to USDA. The HSUS provided expert testimony and a special report, Shipping Animals by Air, that spelled out the numerous threats to animals’ well-being that were routine in the carrier industry.88

Foley’s bill passed in 1976 as the Humane Transport Act. In February 1977 an administrative law judge endorsed many of the contentions The HSUS had made in its CAB petition, and the following September, USDA’s animal air transport regulations went into effect. They set a minimum travel age for puppies and kittens, promulgated standards for shipping containers, imposed a maximum limit on the amount of time that animals could remain in transit, mandated health certification of animals, established humane facilities in air terminals, and required shippers to post care and handling instructions on containers used to ship animals.89

USDA did succeed, however, in lessening airlines’ responsibility to transport animals humanely. The agency amended two provisions of its AWA regulations, the first allowing the airlines to approve the use of all shipping containers a dealer asserted to be in compliance with USDA standards, and the second creating a serious loophole in the temperature range specifications. The HSUS was able to head off the latter measure, which lowered the minimum temperature at which animals might be held in airport facilities from forty-five to thirty-five degrees. This proposed relaxation of standards came at the insistence of commercial animal dealers who sought to limit interference with their lucrative Christmas season trade.90

The next decade’s experience with air transportation of animals saw continued complaints about conditions, especially after deregulation of the airline industry in 1983. Two years later Phyllis Wright estimated that deregulation had resulted in at least a 50 percent increase in complaints to The HSUS. Animals continued to arrive dead in carrying crates and sometimes did not arrive at all, as carriers sent them to the wrong airports in the wrong cities. With the 1976 AWA amendments in place, however, staff members were at least able to follow up with USDA officials after turning over the information needed to investigate incidents and grievances that citizens brought to their attention.91

Responding to pleas for action in spring 1987, Representative Tom Lantos (D-CA), a strong supporter of animal welfare concerns, convened a meeting with airline industry representatives, government officials, and HSUS staff members to discuss the rise in complaints.
Unsafe conditions, inadequate handling procedures, and delays and misrouting remained all too common, and Lantos counted on the likelihood that a strong expression of congressional interest would make USDA and other agencies more attentive to the problem.92

From Pound Seizure to Pet Protection
One of the most important sources of tension within the humane movement in the 1950s involved pound seizure or mandatory surrender of animals, especially after passage of New York State’s Metcalf-Hatch Act in 1952. This legislation required New York municipal pounds to supply hospitals, medical research facilities, and commercial laboratories with unclaimed animals. Metcalf-Hatch provoked bitter controversy and determined opposition from some of the state’s humane organizations, many of which did not oppose research with animals but “could not countenance experimentation with animals which had once been pets.”93

The legislators who acquiesced to the research community’s demand for access to pound and shelter animals by passing such legislation were not typically sensitive to the function and charge of humane societies. They were generally private organizations, supported by endowments and individual donations. In most communities, the humane society usually saved the taxpayers money by assuming the responsibilities once borne by the dismal municipal pound. Whatever public subsidy a society received for animal control never covered the actual costs involved in the gathering up of strays and related activities, not to mention the range of overhead costs necessary to maintain a proper organization, with veterinarians, educators, equipment, ambulances, literature, property, and other costs.

Whether or not humane societies were running a public pound, most were governed by a sense of responsibility to the animals in their care. If possible, humane workers hoped to return animals to the homes from which they had been lost or strayed or help to find suitable new homes for them. Failing these outcomes, or in cases of serious disease and injury, they were committed to ensuring a merciful and painless death of the animals in their charge.

There was also the issue of public trust—that people would hesitate to relinquish animals to shelters for fear that those animals would be used for research. Such perceptions could undermine a shelter’s role as a haven for unwanted animals. As a consequence, the animals not relinquished to shelters might face worse fates.

Like many of their colleagues in organized animal protection, the founders of The HSUS were opposed to pound seizure. As a result, the protection of animals—lost, stolen, or strayed—from the threat of being taken for laboratory experiments has been a priority since the organization first incorporated. Much of the founders’ outrage focused on the ASPCA, which was responsible for municipal animal control in New York City. Myers and others charged that the ASPCA had acquiesced to pressure from Governor Thomas Dewey and members of the New York legislature in the early 1950s—backed up by a $1 million licensing and animal control contract—and failed to resist Metcalf-Hatch. By accepting public money, the ASPCA was required to surrender dogs and cats to scientific institutions—and it did.94

The issue came up regularly during the 1950s and early 1960s, and The HSUS tried to provide strong support to humane societies attempting to fend off pound surrender ordinances. Fred Myers testified against pound seizure before state legislatures and local councils, advancing the view that research, teaching, and commercial laboratories should not be permitted to take animals from pounds and shelters. The HSUS not only argued that pound seizure laws aggravated the challenge of developing humane solutions to the surplus animal problem. It also advanced the view that such laws encouraged neglect of animals in laboratories by making an unlimited source of dogs and cats available at very little cost.95

Sometimes, the matter went to the courts. In July 1963 The HSUS’s Utah State branch challenged a new pound seizure law in the Utah Supreme Court as unconstitutional. HSUS officials announced that they would submit to arrest rather than release animals from the
branch’s shelter. The HSUS’s national office backed the branch fully, with both legal counsel and financial support.96

Investigation was another way in which The HSUS sought to make its case. By focusing on wholesale dog dealers who mainly supplied research institutions—after buying up animals at pounds and shelters—field agents exposed the mistreatment and neglect of former pets on their way into the laboratories. During the period 1963–1966, Frank McMahon, Dale Hylton, and other investigators filed charges of cruelty against a number of dealers keeping animals in inadequate and unsanitary conditions. In time such investigations revealed the activity of dealers who routinely bribed pound and shelter employees for access to animals, sometimes against the explicit policies of the shelters’ boards of directors. The HSUS also sought to persuade local communities to execute animal control contracts with humane societies rather than private operators who—unmotivated by humane feeling—made very little effort to find homes for healthy, well-adjusted animals, preferring to sell them to laboratories or medical schools.97

During the 1960s, while pound seizure remained objectionable, it took a backseat to the epidemic of pet stealing that attended the laboratory animal trade. While the practices were related, it was pet stealing that helped to catalyze public concern in the effort to reform the traffic in laboratory animals. As part of this shift in focus, on August 11, 1965, 350 members of The HSUS, in all states but Delaware, New Hampshire, Hawaii, Wyoming, and Alaska, counted the number of dogs and cats advertised as lost and found in their local newspapers. The HSUS estimated that the nationwide traffic in stolen dogs generated at least $50 million in income annually and that two million dogs disappeared every year to become laboratory subjects.98

But pound seizure still surfaced as a controversial problem, as it did in California just weeks after the passage of the AWA. In that crucial state, the HSUS California branch led a successful campaign of opposition to a statewide pound seizure initiative, while losing its battle to prevent the San Diego pound from contracting for the sale of impounded animals to the University of California. Another skirmish ensued in New Jersey, where HSUS branch president Jacques Sichel and executive director Donald Maxfield collaborated with the national office to defeat a mandatory pound seizure law in 1967. The following year The HSUS played a strong role in helping members of the Dane County (Wisconsin) Humane Society overcome an attempted takeover of that organization by University of Wisconsin medical school personnel determined to ensure a supply of shelter animals for use in laboratories.99

Although keeping lost or stolen pets out of the laboratory trade was a principal goal of the original AWA, by the 1980s it was clear the AWA had not succeeded in doing so. Class B dealers, licensed by USDA and permitted by the statute to gather animals from random sources, commonly acquired and sold animals stolen or procured through deception from households (like answering “free to a good home” advertisements); purchased or brokered through auction “bunchers” without proper records; or “adopted” from pounds, shelters, and other sources under false pretenses. On some occasions, USDA inspectors consciously ignored violations of federal law, including falsification of records—the best check against pet theft.100

In the 1980s, under the leadership of John Hoyt, The HSUS renewed its engagement in the issue of pound seizure. In 1984 The HSUS pushed for a government report on the use of random source animals in American laboratories. The HSUS also provided crucial leadership for the ProPets coalition, which sought to secure pound seizure prohibitions at the local level. ProPets drafted a model state bill for use at local and state levels and targeted communities of promise or special urgency. The coalition operated on the basis of The HSUS’s long-standing convictions that, as Hoyt put it, “Making animals available for such purposes is contrary to the purpose and proper function of a public or private shelter,” and that “making animals available for such purposes aggravates the problems of animal control and protection.”101
Nevertheless, the coalition’s record in its chosen strategy of supporting community-level referenda on the subject backfired in the wake of several significant losses. This led to a change in strategy, and in May 1986, the pound seizure ban went national, as Representative Robert Mrazek (D-NY) introduced H.R. 4871, the Pet Protection Act, to prohibit the use of federal funds for the purchase of animals taken directly or indirectly from animal shelters. This would have amounted to an absolute ban, since the NIH gave out virtually all monies for medical research involving cats and dogs. With shelter animals comprising an estimated 1 percent of the total number of animals used in research, testing, and education, researchers nevertheless attacked the Mrazek bill with energy.

By 1987 Senator Wendell H. Ford (D-KY) introduced another approach to the problem, one that tried to eliminate once and for all the problem of pet theft. In August 1988 the U.S. Senate approved Ford’s bill, which made it an offense for Class B dealers under the AWA to procure “random source” animals from sources other than publicly operated shelters and humane societies as well as individual breeders. The bill required that shelters and pounds hold cats and dogs for at least one week before turning them over to dealers. The measure eliminated the sale of animals at auctions, prime venues for the disposal of stolen animals.

Unfortunately, Ford’s Pet Theft Act collapsed in the Senate, as the research community mobilized in opposition to its passage. A diluted version of the bill was added to the 1990 Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act. This amended the AWA to require that animals in shelters and pounds be held for a minimum of five days—including a Saturday—before being sold to research facilities and that all relevant records follow the animal through every move and transfer.

While efforts to address the problem of pet theft continued into the 1990s, the struggle to eliminate pound seizure subsided. Fewer and fewer research institutions wanted to use pound animals or face the intense negative attention such use brought with it. In 1954 pound seizure, seen as a terrible provocation to humane societies, had helped to precipitate the schism that gave birth to The HSUS. At one time, some fourteen states and hundreds of communities required municipally owned and operated shelters to provide unclaimed animals for research. By 1991 fourteen states had prohibited pound seizure, and many municipalities had dropped the practice, convinced that it was a public relations nightmare for local shelters.

Coming to Terms with the Companion Animal Surplus

In the late 1980s, The HSUS began to explore ways to harness the power of individual consumers—which had proved to be such a powerful tool in the campaigns against fur—to the challenge of reducing the population of unwanted and homeless animals. In 1988 The HSUS launched its first effort of this kind under the battle cry, “Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter!” The campaign underscored the many ways in which companion animal overpopulation led to abuse and neglect of animals all over the country and celebrated the positive animal control accomplishments that had helped to decrease the population of unwanted animals in some communities. Award categories honored a variety of contributions to the field. Representative Thomas Foley (D-WA) and Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) sponsored resolutions to raise public awareness by designating April 1988 as “National Prevent A Litter Month.”

In 1991 The HSUS extended its efforts to end the euthanasia of healthy animals languishing in the nation’s animal shelters by launching a corollary campaign, Adopt One, under the slogan “Until There Are None, Adopt One!” Finally in March 1993, President Paul Irwin called...
for a temporary, one-year national moratorium on the breeding of dogs and cats. This brought The HSUS into a direct struggle with professional breeders and the AKC, whose practices had been, at least indirectly, exacerbating the homeless animal crisis for many decades. In the year of the moratorium alone, the AKC registered 1.5 million new dogs.107

While none of these initiatives was launched with the realistic expectation that it would actually end the tragedy of surplus animals, they reflected the organization’s desire to raise awareness concerning the multifaceted dimensions of the problem and the need for a variety of approaches to its solution. They also showed The HSUS’s determination to challenge all parties to do more.108

The message of these various initiatives was a simple one: dogs and cats died in shelters because there were too many of them, and to resolve this tragedy it was necessary to reduce the number of births. The HSUS considered the moratorium campaign a marked success not so much because it resulted in any measurable decline in animal births, but because of the intense dialogue and publicity it engendered.109

**Taking Cruelty Seriously: Felony Status and First Strike™**

In the mid-1980s Phyllis Wright and Randall Lockwood began to discuss the need for a comprehensive campaign to ensure that law enforcement and social services agencies took individual cases of cruelty to animals seriously, for their inherent viciousness as well as for what they might say about the perpetrator’s potential for further misdeeds, including further violence against animals or human beings. After years of experience in conducting raids, HSUS investigators were in a position to confirm that law enforcement officers took dogfighting very seriously in states where it was a felony. This led the organization to push harder for “upgrade” (from misdemeanor to felony-level offense) campaigns. Investigators Bob Baker, Eric Sakach, and others testified before many state legislatures and were key figures in the assignment of felony status to such crimes.110

Wright watched these developments with interest, for she had been having a lot of trouble getting law enforcement agencies to treat individual cases of cruelty seriously. On occasion, she noted, even the most shocking instances of cruelty failed to move local authorities, and they frequently failed to pursue such cases with any vigor. This was enormously frustrating to Wright.111

Staff members agreed that a thorough campaign would involve education, legislative initiatives, and enhanced networking with law enforcement agencies. In 1986 Lockwood and Guy Hodge authored an award-winning piece in *HSUS News* that highlighted “The Tangled Web of Animal Abuse”—“the link between cruelty to animals and other forms of violent or anti-social behavior.” This landmark article marked the first step in the campaign to sensitize the humane movement to the need for serious efforts to integrate its concerns with those of law enforcement and social service agencies.112 This first step taken, Lockwood and other members of his Training Initiatives staff initiated a program, termed First Strike™, of outreach to law enforcement and social services agencies. The HSUS hired a social worker to coordinate some of these relationships, and Lockwood undertook a heavy schedule of lectures, training, and documentation efforts to support the program.

Within a decade of these initial steps to develop broader outreach, The HSUS was in regular contact with congressional offices, representatives of the FBI and the Department of Justice, and other law enforcement agencies. It was collaborating in efforts to promote awareness and education within law enforcement circles, which began to view prosecution of
animal cruelty cases as an important part of threat assessment and another way of getting dan-
gerous individuals into the legal system. With more successful animal cruelty prosecutions on the record, humane societies and law enforcement personnel would find themselves better equipped to address future threats to animals or people by the same individuals.113

Staff members from government affairs, regional offices, companion animals, and other sections and departments, following the initiative of longtime legislative specialist Ann Church, also worked to support the program, pushing for legislation to upgrade deliberate animal cruelty from misdemeanor to felony status. In 1999 The HSUS was responsible for the passage of seven such laws, and by 2004 The HSUS had pushed the total number of states in which such acts could be prosecuted as felonies to forty-one.114

Dangerous Dogs
One of the most serious offshoots of dogfighting in the 1980s (see chapter 7) was the alarming rise of vicious dog attacks and fatalities. As the problem of dangerous dogs came to increased public attention, it began to occupy a greater proportion of staff time and organizational resources within The HSUS. Public preoccupation with the topic reached an unprecedented peak in 1986.115

The dangerous dog problem presented animal control organizations and government agencies throughout the country with a serious challenge. For many years the local societies The HSUS serviced had been keeping statistics on the problem, sometimes as a legal respon-
sibility under the terms of animal control agreements. However, the programs they managed had been designed to address issues associated with rabies, and they were less well equipped to handle other concerns. As investigation and research revealed, however, by the mid-1980s the dangerous dog problem had its roots in the irresponsible breeding and use of vicious dogs for fighting, protection, and other purposes.116

As community after community moved to consider breed-specific bans and other regulatory measures, The HSUS established itself as a preeminent source of sound data and coun-
sel. This was another area in which Randall Lockwood worked closely with staff members in the Companion Animals section. From 1986 on The HSUS collaborated with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control to track fatal dog attacks. The year 1990 produced an all-time high of twenty-four such deaths. In 1995 The HSUS joined forces with the U.S. Postal Service to stage National Dog Bite Prevention Week.117

Limited-Admission and No-Kill Operations
The HSUS has always endorsed euthanasia over indefinite and substandard confinement and careful screening over indiscriminate placement in its work. Even as the “no-kill” movement gained momentum and popularity during the 1990s, The HSUS hewed to the perspective its founding figures had articulated and opposed the warehousing of animals. In its public comments on the issue, The HSUS reframed the debate as one between open- vs. limited-admis-
sion facilities and underscored its view that there are worse things than death for an animal, including not only disease and neglect but also a life of physical and or psychological depriva-
tion and distress. In the tradition of Phyllis Wright, The HSUS championed the work of good shelters and did not turn its back on them in light of the no-kill challenge.118

In responding to the no-kill movement, The HSUS found a compass in its original man-
date—to strengthen and enhance the general work of the humane movement—the whole movement. At the same time, the organization hewed to a firm view, encompassed by the fol-
lowing statement:

The HSUS believes that keeping old, sick, aggressive, or otherwise unadoptable an-
imals caged in the shelter for months, years, or lifetimes to avoid euthanasia is not in the animals’ best interests—and would not be even if every shelter had unlimited space and resources. The HSUS is strongly opposed to the long-term, institutional
housing of companion animals because it may deprive animals of adequate human attention. Every dog, cat, and other companion animal deserves—and ultimately belongs in—a lifelong home with attentive, responsible caregivers.\textsuperscript{119}

The HSUS’s longstanding policy had, of course, been shaped by an earlier era’s deep shock at the state of no-kill facilities. “I have found that while an animal shelter offers a genuine temporary refuge for homeless animals, as a permanent abode such confinement produces misery and frustration for most dogs,” one early supporter wrote. Mel Morse, while speaking sympathetically of the intentions of those who ran no-kill operations, nevertheless noted, “Those of us who have been in this movement very long have seen the results—an accumulation of animals either imprisoned for life in kennel runs or running at large where disease is rampant. Many of us investigating such premises see miserable animals—some tied to trees, others chained to dog houses, many with sores, some dead among the living.” Then, Morse observed, “where do you say no to the next animal when all the facilities are full….How about the hundreds to follow? There comes the time inevitably when the decision has to be reached—euthanasia.”\textsuperscript{120}

At the same time, The HSUS was never complacent about euthanasia. Fred Myers frequently admonished colleagues that “any humane society that runs a ‘slaughter house’ without simultaneously fighting unceasingly to get at the roots of the need for wholesale euthanasia is not entitled to be called a humane society.” Myers admired those colleagues who, “while courageously taking on themselves the miserable and deeply distressing task of euthanasia, [also] labor prodigiously against the necessity.”\textsuperscript{121}

The HSUS strove to remind all parties to the debate that earnest and dedicated shelters and humane workers should not be blamed for the overpopulation crisis and the euthanasia policy. “The whole community, not just the shelter and its caring staff, bears the responsibility for euthanasia of unwanted animals,” Martha Armstrong said in 1998. Armstrong even proffered the example of one shelter that sought to underscore this point in its own community by reporting “how many unwanted animals the community generates instead of stating how many animals the shelter euthanatizes.”\textsuperscript{122}

\section*{Celebrating the Companion Animal Bond}

While facing up to many of the worst threats to the well-being of dogs, cats, and other companion animals, and drawing important distinctions between what humans want to do with animals and what is actually in animals’ interests, The HSUS did not fail to celebrate the bond between humans and companion animals in its programs and outreach. In developing its programs, The HSUS relied on the goodwill and support of those who cared about animals, many of whom kept animals in their own homes. The HSUS did its best to acquaint new supporters with a broader range of animal-related concerns, in keeping with the vision of its founders to focus the attention of those who cared about dogs and cats onto the wider universe of animal suffering.

The safety and security of companion animals was a priority from the day The HSUS opened its doors, and the organization placed special emphasis on the prevention of animal theft. In 1956 The HSUS called for a national law to make the transportation of stolen dogs across state lines a federal crime, and Fred Myers asked staff members to explore cooperation with private companies on the development of a foolproof method of identifying dogs to minimize the large numbers lost, stolen, or abandoned. The campaign for the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act during the 1960s became, in part, a war against petnapping, and The
HSUS was relentless in its efforts to halt the traffic in animals, assigning more staff investigators to the problem than any other organization. The HSUS also targeted inferior labeling standards for animal food products in its early years. After the first federal guidelines on the subject were issued in the early 1960s, The HSUS pointed out that the FDA had long failed in its efforts to enforce good practices. The HSUS called upon the states to institute more rigorous requirements that would frustrate the use of adulterated or filler products in pet foods. Successful state testing programs in a few states had done much to discourage false and exaggerated claims and misleading designation of product ingredients.

As an organization formed to promote the adoption of homeless animals from pounds and shelters and to encourage responsible guardianship and care, The HSUS welcomed the 1966 issuance of a U.S. five-cent commemorative stamp dedicated to the “Humane Treatment of Animals.” The stamp, issued in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of the humane movement, featured a mongrel dog.

Throughout its history, The HSUS has vigorously challenged characterizations of animals as a social nuisance and dismissed works that depict devotion to them as a symptom of social alienation. Against such demonization of companion animals and those who care about them, The HSUS has highlighted the vital contribution that animals make to human mental and physical health, as part of appropriately managed animal-assisted therapy, and, more commonly, as part of a healthy family and home life.

In those cases where individual renters could establish their ability to properly care for animals, The HSUS supported and fought to preserve their freedom to keep companion animals. As early as 1976, The HSUS backed legislation to prohibit federal assistance to rental housing projects in which tenants were forbidden to keep animals and to local governments that do not permit animals in rental housing. In 1983 staff members worked for the passage of legislation to allow the elderly and the handicapped to have pets in all federally subsidized housing. The HSUS helped to scuttle attempts by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to limit P.L. 98-181’s coverage to individuals living in housing built exclusively for occupancy by the elderly and handicapped. By 1995 this campaign developed even further, providing such a guarantee for anyone in federally subsidized housing; this measure passed in 1999. At about the same time, The HSUS launched its Rent with Pets™ program (rentwithpets.org), which helped people to locate suitable housing where they could live with companion animals and worked proactively to persuade property owners and homeowners’ associations that those who kept animals in a responsible way were excellent tenants.

After its formation in 1975, the HSUS Legal Department was a staunch defender of the principle that people should be able to make suitable arrangements for the care of animals following the deaths of their human guardians. In 1976 HSUS General Counsel Murdaugh Madden made a submission to a Florida court that expressed concern with the callousness of banks and trust officers in observing the wishes of individuals who had attempted to make such provisions. Madden also penned articles on the subject from time to time, exploring the pitfalls and challenges of such situations, encouraging readers of HSUS News to work out suitable arrangements with family members and friends willing and able to respond appropriately and to avoid “elaborate legalistic approaches” involving legal and fi-
nancial institutions. "Lawyers rarely, and banks and courts never," Madden warned, "act effectively in a situation where what is needed is quick action, compassion and understanding, and a warm and friendly hand."128

The HSUS has also been attentive to opportunities for celebrating the human-animal bond through special events, contests, and programming. In 1986 Phyllis Wright served as one of the judges in Purina Dog Chow's "Search for Capitol Hill's Great American Dog." In 1993 The HSUS was the beneficiary of proceeds from a "Socks Appeal" contest to find a cat that most resembled President Clinton's. In 1996 The HSUS co-sponsored a public debate between journalists from Dog World and Cats magazines, on whether a dog or a cat was best qualified to represent the nation's companion animals. In 1999 former Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) and his wife, Elizabeth, entered the name of their dog, Leader, into The HSUS's Book of Kindred Spirits, established to pay tribute to departed loved ones. On three different occasions, The HSUS underwrote the broadcast of the James Herriot series, All Creatures Great and Small, on a Washington, D.C.-area public television station.129

In 1993 eleven animal-related organizations, including The HSUS, joined together to launch the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy to gather and analyze data on the keeping of animals, to promote responsible stewardship, and to develop programs for the reduction and elimination of the homeless and unwanted animal overpopulation. In 1996 The HSUS convened a twelve-member National Companion Animals Advisory Group, comprised of respected shelter administrators from around the country, to assist in shaping the goals and programs of the Companion Animals section. The group met twice a year to review policy and programmatic concerns and regularly consulted with staff members on a variety of sheltering issues.130

By the end of the twentieth century, research efforts examined the problem of companion animal overpopulation as a multifaceted question, one that called for sound quantitative analysis to determine which animals were being handed over to shelters and by whom, economic comparisons of the relative costs of animal control versus other programs, and sociological investigations of the human-animal relationship and its value. Practical and scholarly attention to the problem of relinquishment increasingly focused on the ostensible "failure" of human-companion animal relationships, manifest in such phenomena as abandonment, neglect, surrender at shelters, unrestrained reproduction, and wandering. On the assumption that better bonds would reduce the range of problems that result in animal suffering and death, The HSUS committed itself to fostering greater understanding of the psychological and biological needs of animals and to promoting a broader public responsibility toward animals.

The HSUS did not join those organizations attempting to spur a transformation in the treatment of companion animals by pushing for the substitution of the word, "guardian," for "owner" in legislation and ordinances. While generally supportive of the view that the keeping of animals encompassed far more than simply a right of property, for a variety of reasons, The HSUS did not support the legal change in terminology to guardianship, instead endorsing and promoting use of the term, "caregiver."131

However, the organization remained as committed as any to the idea that people should make their commitments to individual animals lifelong, that such commitment should not be broken for frivolous or resolvable reasons, and that humans were obligated
to provide for their companions not only during their lives, but also—as they grew older—with a humane death. These convictions formed the core of a new signature program introduced in the early twenty-first century, Pets for Life®, which had as its goal the cultivation of successful bonds between humans and companion animals and, through the sustenance of better relationships between humans and the animals with whom they shared their lives, the reduction of shelter relinquishments.

Conclusion

As the new century dawned, taking advantage of The HSUS’s own publishing and distribution capacities, the Companion Animals section commissioned or cowrote a number of full-length works, including The Humane Society of the United States Complete Guide to Dog Care (published by Little, Brown and Company), The Humane Society of the United States Complete Guide to Cat Care (published by St. Martin’s Press), Community Approaches to Feral Cats, and The Humane Society of the United States Euthanasia Training Manual. These and other publications helped thousands of animal care and control professionals to meet the daily challenges of their work and millions of people worldwide to better care for their companion animals. The HSUS’s Video Services department also advanced the goals of companion animal protection through the distribution of one-minute segments on companion animals twice weekly to more than one hundred news stations around the country. As a source of information on companion animal care, The HSUS had few equals by 2004.

While relations with the veterinary community continued to run hot and cold—according to the issue—The HSUS did not stop trying to forge appropriate links. In the late 1990s, program staff began to focus on the development of materials suitable for informing veterinarians about the issues of dogfighting, community animal control, the epidemiology of animal health, and maintenance of the human-companion animal relationship. In 2004 The HSUS was planning to publish a diagnostic guide to encourage veterinarians to identify and report signs of cruelty that may signal domestic abuse or other problems within a family. The organization set its sights on the professionalization of animal shelter medicine and the creation of a shelter medicine curriculum in the nation’s veterinary schools. The HSUS also supported a summer fellowship program launched by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, which supported approximately thirty veterinary students per year in their pursuit of a range of projects to improve companion animal care through the nation’s shelters and in other contexts.

Nor did The HSUS shy away from controversy in confronting cruelty to companion animals. In 1991, after being queried on The HSUS’s position concerning the Iditarod long-distance sled-dog race, HSUS President Paul Irwin directed staff members to investigate the practices of mushers and others associated with that year’s race. That same year four-time Iditarod winner Susan Butcher stated, “We [Iditarod competitors] wouldn’t, as a group, pass anybody’s idea of humane treatment of animals.” The HSUS denounced the event in 1994, after investigations revealed that dogs had died in the race every year since its 1973 inception, their deaths routinely reported alongside information about weather conditions and other race statistics. The HSUS’s action adversely affected the race’s corporate sponsorship, as several prominent corporations ended their association with the Iditarod.

The Companion Animals section worked closely with regional offices of The HSUS, and field representatives frequently represented The HSUS in relations with local societies. While The HSUS had no legal enforcement powers, on occasion field representatives would sign individual complaints in aggravated cases, just as any citizen might. While The HSUS did not become directly involved with the thousands of local investigations and prosecutions going on at any given time throughout the country, staff members frequently furnished advice, guidance, and (sometimes) financial and legal support for such activities. On those occasions when an issue or incident appeared to have national importance or showed potential as a vehicle for advancing the cause through test cases or other initiatives, The HSUS might...
become more actively engaged. After 1985 or so, the same was true in large-scale cases like those involving animal hoarders, in which The HSUS sometimes did become involved with rescue operation support, the delivery of equipment and training, and appropriate networking among responsible agencies.

In keeping with the organization’s increasingly international outreach, the Companion Animals section was also involved in efforts to promote higher standards of animal care and control work abroad. In some parts of the world, the deficient practices in use harkened back to those that characterized nineteenth-century America in their inadequacy and crudeness. There was hardly a country in the world that did not face the challenge of having to deal with a surplus animal population, and The HSUS’s international arm, HSI, was well able to draw program staff from the Companion Animals section into the arena of international work.134

Above all, however, staff members in the section continued to cover the dozens of issues involving companion animal well-being that had come within their remit. The section regularly dealt with such concerns as fad pets, collectors and hoarders, puppy mill breeding, the handling of feral cat populations, euthanasia techniques, greyhound racing, and questions of veterinary care. The section maintained an active portfolio of casework, helping shelters with their efforts to secure funding, conducting pound and shelter inspections, working on legislation to facilitate the licensing of shelters to use controlled drugs for euthanasia of animals, mediating disputes over rabies control policy, assisting with investigations, and providing hands-on relief in the case of disaster or failure of physical plant systems around the country.

In 2004 no one associated with humane work could overlook the fact that millions of domestic animals were still homeless and abandoned to uncertain fates each year. Still, there were encouraging signs of progress in the field. Humane societies had made significant gains in their efforts to reduce the numbers of animals euthanized because they were not wanted. They were attempting to meet new challenges, especially the population of stray and feral cats. Most important, however, they were addressing their work with better information, expertise, and precedent.

From The HSUS’s inception, a deep concern for companion animal welfare was a hallmark of its programs. By the time of The HSUS’s fiftieth anniversary, the Companion Animals section was The HSUS’s largest section, reflecting its commitment to the health and well-being of companion animals, the concerns of the humans who loved and cared for them, and the needs of the many private organizations and community agencies that served, guaranteed, and protected their interests. Fred Myers saw local humane institutions as The HSUS’s central constituency, and Phyllis Wright and her colleagues did their best to nourish this vision through decades of service and devotion. During The HSUS’s first half-century, the animal care and shelter community in the United States evolved to an extent that would have gratified 1950s-era advocates, who had long had to contend with the unflattering implications of being “just dogcatchers” for several generations. The physical facilities and veterinary medical capabilities of humane societies and animal control agencies had vastly improved. Their stature in their respective communities had grown, and to an increasing degree, their policies on animal overpopulation, dangerous dogs, veterinary care, and other matters had become more preventive than reactive in character. It was not a coincidence that this evolution in the field closely paralleled the emergence and development of The HSUS itself. Not only could it celebrate the increasing professionalism of the field; it could also lay a substantial claim to some measure of credit for having helped that process along.