The HSUS led the fight against animal fighting, which remained a high-profile issue with the widely publicized imprisonment of Michael Vick following his 2007 conviction for running an organized dogfighting ring.

Congress increased penalties and made possession of fighting birds or dogs a federal felony. Fifteen states passed HSUS-backed animal fighting bills. Georgia, Idaho, and Wyoming stiffened their penalties, making dogfighting a felony now in all 50 states, while Wyoming and Virginia became the 36th and 37th states to make cockfighting a felony. We also trained more than 2,000 sworn officers in animal fighting investigations and prosecutions.

Shutting Them Down

We increased our standard reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone involved in dogfighting or any form of staged animal fighting from $2,500 to $5,000, thanks to a grant from the Holland M. Ware Charitable Foundation. In 2008, we paid 26 rewards for tips resulting in successful cases against dogfighters and cockfighters, busting major operations and putting nationally significant players behind bars.

We also launched an animal fighting tip line in Georgia, partnering with corporate security firm Norred & Associates. Because of the tip line and HSUS investigative work, eight fighting kennels were raided, their dogs seized, and many people were arrested.

Nationwide, The HSUS assisted in 57 animal fighting raids, which netted 301 suspects and 2,649 fighting dogs and roosters. A North Carolina hit took down one of the nation’s most notorious operators after a three-year HSUS investigation. The internationally known breeder of fighting dogs and author of one of the most infamous books on how to breed and raise dogs for fighting pled guilty to 14 felony counts and was sentenced to up to 10 months in prison.

A 12-month HSUS investigation with the Pima County, Ariz., Sheriff’s Department resulted in six arrests, including that of a longtime and nationally known breeder of fighting dogs. Some 150 dogs, many bearing scars from past fights, were confiscated along with thousands of dollars in cash and about 50 guns. Learn more at humansociety.org/acf.

Taking on Animal Fighters

Animal Cruelty
**Fun, not Fighting**

In two high-crime neighborhoods where pit bulls are more likely to be violent weapons than beloved pets, more than 50 young men and women and their dogs participated in Pit Bull Training Team classes offered by our End Dogfighting in Chicago campaign.

In addition to basic obedience and agility classes, the street-level intervention and education program featured eight community outreach events, including doghouse giveaways, vaccination clinics, rap concerts, and rallies.

We also designed a two-month anti-dogfighting humane education curriculum, which was implemented in area middle schools. More than 260 law enforcement officers in Chicago and Cook County completed our training sessions on how to tackle animal fighting crimes. Chicago is the pilot program for an ambitious HSUS campaign to end dogfighting in the nation’s inner cities, which we expanded to Atlanta in October 2008. Learn more at humansociety.org/enddogfighting.

**Fur-Free Milestones**

Overstock.com and BCBG became the latest major apparel retailers to sign on to The HSUS’s list of companies that have pledged to end fur sales, joining such fashion giants as Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, and Kenneth Cole.

With annual revenues of $700 million, Overstock.com is the first online-only vendor and the 100th company to join our fur-free list. The BCBG Max Azria Group has a portfolio of 15 brands and operates a retail and wholesale network that includes more than 13,500 sales outlets worldwide.

Ariana Huemer, an HSUS animal cruelty case manager, described the scene in Pima County, Ariz., when The HSUS and the sheriff’s SWAT team raided the compound.

Some dogs ran endlessly around well-worn circular paths—their small worlds circumscribed by the lengths of their heavy chains. Others leapt manically to the tops of their chain-link kennel confines. All were frantic for human attention and seemingly half-mad from their lives of isolation and confinement, living in decrepit conditions and cruel captivity.

Aside from the scores of scarred, injured, and neglected dogs, the deputies seized seized mounds of dogfighting documents and paraphernalia, including medications, treadmills, “rape stands” for breeding, and breaking sticks to pry apart clamped jaws.

As for the dogs themselves, after a lifetime of isolation interrupted only by periodic bloody bouts in the fighting pit, most had nothing but affection and sloppy kisses for their rescuers.

For these dogs and the countless thousands of others who die in organized dogfighting every year, ensuring a swift and decisive prosecution of their tormentors remains the most important task at hand.

The HSUS filed a second legal petition with the Federal Trade Commission seeking criminal and civil penalties against more than a dozen nationally known retailers and fashion designers for false advertising and mislabeling of fur garments. They included Bloomingdale’s, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Dillard’s. We also filed a lawsuit in Washington, D.C., alleging similar violations against six companies, including Saks, Lord & Taylor, and Neiman Marcus. Learn more at humansociety.org/furfree.

**Targeting Blood Sports**

The HSUS campaign against wildlife abuses continued on a broad front with a strong focus on poaching crimes, captive hunting enterprises, wildlife penning in which confined coyotes and foxes are torn apart by hounds, and contest kills where competitors win prizes for killing the most animals, typically coyotes, prairie dogs, or pigeons.

We won new restrictions on captive hunts in Oregon and Vermont; blocked pigeon shoots at two private clubs in Pennsylvania; defeated extreme pro-hunting legislation in Arizona, Virginia, and Wisconsin; and won bans on Internet hunting in Colorado, Florida, Oklahoma, and Utah, making the practice now illegal in 38 states. Learn more at humansociety.org/wildlifeabuse.