On the Ice: Saving Seals
Canada’s commercial seal hunt is the world’s largest slaughter of marine mammals, and humane activists have fought to end it for more than half a century. Now, its demise may finally be in sight. Throughout 2008, we continued an intensive lobbying campaign, urging the 27-nation European Union to ban imports of Canadian seal products. Our efforts laid the groundwork for a major victory when the EU Parliament voted on May 5, 2009, to prohibit trade in the products from commercial seal slaughters. This could spell the beginning of the end for Canada’s seal hunt. The Canadian government estimates that losing access to the EU could cost the sealing industry $6.6 million (CAD). With a third to a half of all seal products from the Canadian slaughter exported to the EU, the closing of this market is a significant blow to sealers. The victory was the culmination of our multipronged attack on the seal hunt. In 2008, our Protect Seals teams traveled to the ice once again to document the carnage. We were joined by world-renowned photographer and television celebrity Nigel Barker, who produced stunning photographs and a documentary film to increase public awareness of the hunt. The HSUS-led boycott of Canadian seafood expanded to 5,000 restaurants and retail outlets in 2008, and the number of people who have signed our online boycott pledge reached well over 600,000. Compared to pre-boycott levels, Canadian crab exports to the U.S. are down by more than $150 million (CAD) since the boycott was launched. In this same period, the value of Newfoundland fishing and seafood preparation industry exports to the U.S. have dropped by 51 percent. With government subsidies still in hand, the sealing industry will search for new markets, so we’ll work to convince more nations to follow the EU’s example by banning seal product trade. We’ll keep the pressure on the Canadian fishing industry and government with the global boycott of Canadian seafood products. In Canada, we’ll work to build political and public support for our final goal—a law that permanently bans commercial seal hunting. Learn more at humansociety.org/protectseals.

Protecting Wildlife Worldwide
From deep oceans to tropical rainforests, Humane Society International worked around the globe to protect wildlife. After an investigation revealed that the U.S. is the world’s second biggest ivory market after China, eBay Inc. announced that it would no longer sell the commodity on its global websites. This should help reduce the number of elephants slaughtered for their tusks. In partnership with the World Bank and other nongovernmental organizations, we helped launch the Global Tiger Initiative, which will use the bank’s considerable influence and funding to save the world’s fast-dwindling population of wild tigers. HSUS also contributed to the strengthening of Peru’s wildlife laws and regulations by cosponsoring a comprehensive study of the illegal wildlife trade in the northern part of the nation.

Our marine animal initiatives helped protect whales, dolphins, sharks, and sea turtles, and we worked to secure the listing of polar bears as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. With imports of polar bear trophies now prohibited, U.S. hunters will have less incentive to kill these magnificent animals. In Central America, HSUS held regionwide training sessions for law enforcement to aid in the fight against illegal trafficking of endangered wildlife, such as scarlet macaws and spider monkeys. Public awareness and education programs on the trade in illegal wildlife products and exotic pets reached an estimated 800,000 residents and tourists. We funded infrastructure improvements and gave technical assistance to four wildlife rescue centers, which provided direct care for nearly 1,000 animals. HSUS trained nearly 150 cacao producers to create wildlife inventories in order to receive eco-friendly certification. And we worked with local communities and NGOs to develop ecotourism initiatives, giving community members a nonharmful way to benefit from local wildlife and natural resources.
As the world’s most populous nation continues to evolve rapidly into a modern industrial and technological power, HSI is working to bring new ideas and cultural standards to a nation with no humane laws and a long history of ignoring animal cruelty.

In 2008, when the Sichuan earthquake killed more than 70,000 people and millions of animals, HSI jointly initiated China’s first-ever mission to rescue nonhuman quake victims, helping to spark Chinese interest in building a nationwide disaster animal rescue network.

Important First Steps in China

We educated and campaigned on shark finning, tiger farming, domestic cat eating, industrial animal agriculture, shelters, spay/neuter, and other issues. HSI launched an online farm animal welfare resource center in Chinese, and we sponsored a historic international farm animal conference, bringing together some 150 Chinese government officials, academics, journalists, and agricultural producers. Learn more at hsi.org.

HSI Europe is at the forefront of the campaign to update the EU’s more than 20-year-old legislation governing animal experiments. We are pressing the EU to introduce a number of critical provisions that could end the suffering and death of more than 12 million rodents, rabbits, dogs, monkeys, and other animals each year in European research and testing laboratories.

While continuing to operate spay/neuter programs in Chile, Costa Rica, India, Kenya, and Venezuela, we launched additional sterilization and vaccination programs for street dogs and pets in Ecuador, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Peru, the Philippines, and Trinidad. We also trained more than 100 veterinarians in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

HSI Europe is working to end animal testing in the European Union on several fronts, bringing the goal measurably closer. Thanks to HSI Europe’s campaign to accelerate regulatory acceptance of proven alternative methods, the EU’s 27 member countries have moved to adopt animal-free tests for skin irritation. This could spare tens of thousands of rabbits each year from use in outdated and inhumane tests of cosmetics, pesticides, and other chemicals.

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Challenge & Opportunity

HSI policy director Teresa Telecky and consultant Peter Li visited China—the world’s greatest consumer of animal products—to assess treatment of and attitudes toward animals. What they found surprised them.

Skinning animals for their fur while they are still alive; eating dogs; feeding live animals to tigers and lions in safari parks across the country; farming endangered tigers for their parts and bears for bile extraction; and smuggling live wildlife from nearby countries under horrendous conditions to supply China’s exotic food markets.

On hearing these atrocities committed against animals in China, many feel hopeless. However, what we found is that awareness of the need to improve animal welfare is growing. Animal protection groups are springing up to find homes for street animals, rescue dogs from the meat trade, advocate against dog eating, and teach good pet care. Officials are not only tolerant of the new concern for animals but in some cases have offered support. The Beijing government, already working with animal protection groups to help the city’s strays, has expressed interest in cooperating with HSI on urban animal management.

In 2008, a Chinese government agency hosted a meeting, cosponsored by HSI, to discuss farm animal welfare. Some of China’s influential government officials and scholars have argued that tiger farming harms China’s tiger conservation efforts and its international image.

Today, more Chinese are expressing anger about animal cruelty, and businesses exploiting animals are on the defensive. The national press has intensively criticized bear farming and dog eating. Wildlife farming, once glamorized by the media, has lost its luster in the midst of public outcry.

In reality, no nation can claim to be free of animal cruelty. Instead of focusing on the negative, we should ride the wave of change that is beginning to surge through China and help emerging animal protection pioneers there to speed the changes they have set in motion. We arrived in China with doubts and uncertainties. We left with hope for the future.