‘Fur: Going . . . Going . . .’

Fur is going!” said John Grandy, HSUS vice president for wildlife and environment, at a Las Vegas, Nev., press conference in April. The event, organized by local activists with the help of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), The HSUS, and Transpecies, kicked off a protest at the Convention Center, where the International Fur Fair was held. Among the protesters were PETA guests actresses Rue McClanahan and Cassandra Peterson (“Elvira”) and music stars Belinda Carlisle and Jane Wiedlin.

The Las Vegas press conference was the most recent in a long list of events that have comprised the HSUS “Shame of Fur” campaign. Begun in the fall of 1988, “The Shame of Fur” is yielding measurable results: fur ranches have closed down because of a drastic drop in demand for skins; publicly traded fur companies have posted much diminished profits; and, according to trapping magazines, trapping of wild fur animals decreased by 75 to 90 percent in many areas in just one season. Up to fifteen million wild fur-bearers were spared in the 1988-89 season alone.

“Fur is out,” claimed USA Today. Prominent fashion designers have stopped designing furs. Celebrities such as Brooke Shields and Candice Bergen have said “no” to fur. This fall, we will throw our efforts into a major follow-up strike for the “Shame of Fur” campaign. We welcome the participation of local organizations and individuals in these activities; write Pat Ragan at The HSUS for details.

AVON CALLS IT QUITS ON DRAIZE

Avon Products, Inc., has completely discontinued the use of the Draize Eye-Irritancy Test, in which chemicals are placed in the eyes of unanesthetized rabbits. On April 5, Avon announced that it would assess eye irritancy through the use of the Eyetex Test, which does not utilize rabbits or other animals. Although other cosmetics companies also have stopped using the Draize Test, Avon’s high profile in the cosmetics market is seen as having the potential to influence other companies to follow its lead.

On March 2, Avon had announced that it expected to have eliminated all animal testing by June of this year. If Avon fulfills this expectation, we will add its name to the list of cosmetics and personal-care products companies that never have conducted— or no longer conduct— animal testing in the manufacture of their products.

SPEAKING OUT

The HSUS is pleased to announce that Candice Bergen will be our special spokeswoman on several important issues in animal protection. Star of “Murphy Brown,” the hottest new show on television, Ms. Bergen will be a visible presence in our anti-fur campaign, our boycott of ivory products to save endangered African elephants, and the protection of chimpanzees. She has already taped public-service announcements for The HSUS on these topics, for airing this summer on radio stations across the country.

“I’ve always made donations to the Humane Society ever since I can remember,” says Ms. Bergen. “I think that the work the Humane Society does is tremendous, vital work. I like that the Humane Society has a very broad reach. I think it is a very responsible organization.”

The plight of the elephant is one close to her heart. “I’ve been to Africa many times and finally stopped going there because it was too depressing. What was happening there was unbearable to me. I have great respect and appreciation for elephants. I think that what they are suffering at the hands of poachers is just devastating.”

Ms. Bergen’s opposition to the wearing of fur is long-standing. “I haven’t worn fur since I was twenty-one, when I gave away a mink coat I had. I love animals—I consider them equals, and I just want to live easily with myself. I don’t want to participate in activities that sanction cruelty.”

She has incorporated her beliefs into her work, as well. “I don’t ever wear fur in fashion layouts—I always refuse,” she explains. “The only time I’ve worn a fur coat was when I was playing a dim-witted, very self-centered character in a film. I’ll wear fur to make a statement if it’s for a character that is clearly self-absorbed, self-centered, and unenlightened.”

Future issues of the HSUS News will carry more details of Ms. Bergen’s association with the society. We welcome her active participation in our program.