



A Line in the Sand

Ohio family farmers join the fight to release their state from factory farming's chokehold

Just three miles from Tom Harrison's Northwest Ohio home stands a warehouse-like facility that may one day house thousands of dairy cows.

Long familiar with the plight of people who live next to industrial farming operations, Harrison cringes to think of the putrid smell, fly swarms, toxic emissions, and water pollution likely headed his way—and the plummeting quality of life soon to follow. His heart sinks at the thought of the way animals spend their days inside such overcrowded facilities, treated more like production units on the milking line than sentient beings.

These factory-style operations stand in stark contrast to the type of farming Harrison practiced for much of his life. "I remember going out in the barn when it was winter and taking care of them," he says of the flock of sheep he kept for about 30 years. "You just can't buy [these animals] and forget about them. You've got to nurture them and make sure they're growing up and doing OK."

As someone who has seen animals care for one another and frolic in play, Harrison understands their capacity for suffering. He remembers, too, the bonds between lambs and their mothers. "The ewes always knew when it was time to eat, and they would corral their babies," he says. "I loved being a shepherd because it was something I could really take care of."

Disgusted by factory farms' elevation of profit and production over compassion and community, Harrison and other Wood County farmers and residents have fought against mega dairies for more than a decade. Despite their best efforts, as many as six factory farms may soon be operating in the county. Seeking a larger voice, the grassroots group joined the Ohio Environmental Stewardship Alliance, a coalition of small farmers, environmentalists, conservationists, and average citizens. Harrison and other coalition members have now turned their sights to supporting an HSUS-backed campaign that could stop

or at least slow the spread of the big agribusiness model in Ohio: a November ballot initiative targeting some of the worst animal abuses.

The initiative would phase out extreme forms of confinement on factory farms: small cages for veal calves, egg-laying hens, and breeding pigs. It would prohibit the transport of downer cows, who are too sick or hurt to stand on their own, effectively preventing them from being slaughtered for food. And it would set humane standards of euthanasia for pigs and cattle; while current law addresses methods of slaughter for some animals destined for human consumption, no such laws exist in Ohio for the killing of sick and injured farm animals. In a 2006 undercover investigation conducted by the Humane Farming Association, workers in one of the state's factory farms were videotaped hanging sick pigs,

Factory Farming in Ohio

Egg-laying hens: With 27 million egg-laying hens and about 7 billion eggs produced annually, Ohio is the nation's No. 2 egg-producing state.

Veal calves: The number of veal calves is unknown, but Ohio ranks in the top six veal-producing states.

Breeding pigs: Ohio has about 170,000 breeding pigs and is ranked eighth nationally in pork production.

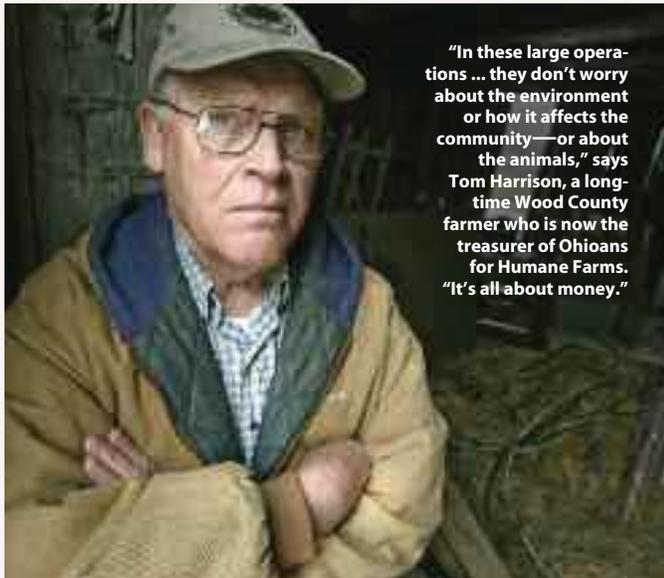


slamming them against concrete, and beating them to death with a hammer.

Coming two years after the overwhelming passage of a landmark ballot initiative outlawing similar extreme confinement systems in California, the Ohio measure would bring reasonable reforms to one of the nation's top farming states. The state's Department of Agriculture lists about 160 facilities as large-scale factory farms, but as many as 4,000 more unpermitted operations may barely miss the threshold for this classification, says Joe Logan, director of agricultural programs at the Ohio Environmental Council.

The economies of scale achieved by these agribusiness behemoths might seem attractive to consumers, says Logan, but the real costs are obscured from public view in the form of government subsidies and other burdens. "What the consumer may save in nominal food prices is typically paid back in additional taxes to stabilize those very large industries," he says, "and also in health impacts and a whole array of things that don't get calculated directly into the food cost, such as the enormous footprint they've made on the environmental quality in Ohio."

If passed, the proposed law is likely to help soften this blow, Logan says; intensive confinement of fewer animals would inevitably lead to reduced applications of manure on fields and lower pollution levels.



Concern for the environment has long been at the forefront of the battle in Wood County, given the region's location in a floodplain and its consequent vulnerability to water pollution from animal waste. Harrison first took up the fight 15 years ago, when a New York mega-dairy farmer came prospecting in Wood County. He and other community members had heard enough of the stories—about how nearby waterways often turn brown with fecal sludge and the stench of gigantic manure cesspools drives neighbors indoors—to want to see for themselves.

A team of Wood County residents headed to New York for a firsthand look at their potential neighbor's home-base operation. "What they saw was something they didn't want in their community," says



Harrison. "Not when you can see manure coming down the road, leaking from the lagoon or from the dairy farm."

Although the activists eventually fended off the New Yorker, two mega dairies later opened. Another has since been built but hasn't begun operations. A fourth is in the planning stages, and a fifth has been proposed. Wood County is also home to an egg factory that confines hundreds of thousands of hens.

For residents fighting to take back their community, the stakes in the upcoming ballot initiative campaign are high. And the nation's big agribusiness groups will likely be looking to Ohio as a battleground to defend their interests; they already spent millions last fall trying to prevent real reform, securing passage of a measure that created a livestock standards board controlled by special interests with a stake in maintaining the status quo.

But Harrison, who is serving as treasurer of the Ohioans for Humane Farms campaign, thinks The HSUS and its supporters can gather the 403,000 valid signatures needed to secure the issue's placement on the Nov. 2 ballot. A survey of likely voters in Ohio shows strong support for an initiative to ensure animals on factory farms can stand up, lie down, turn around, and extend their limbs. Recent history also demonstrates a promising trend. Since the beginning of the decade, The HSUS has led the charge to pass a number of farm animal protection laws; of the nine enacted in seven states, three were the result of citizen ballot initiatives.

If Harrison and other compassionate Ohioans have anything to say about it, by the end of the year the Buckeye State will join that list. Wood County resident Vickie Askins, whose father and grandfather farmed in Ohio, laments the seemingly unstoppable alignment of forces enabling factory farms to set up shop in her community. Large crop farmers in the area even agreed to raise grain for the dairies in exchange for manure to spread on their fields—a devil's bargain for many longtime neighbors. Sometimes when Askins visits friends who live near a dairy farm, she can hardly breathe. "It's not just manure. I grew up around that smell with the dairy cows we had. But it's more like a toxic smell. ... Imagine what it's like for the animals inside," she says. Askins hopes the ballot initiative will help fuel momentum against the mega dairies as well. "We are just so happy to get some help up here."

—Ruthanne Johnson



Parting the Waters

Out of the ruins, a haven emerges

Even before Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, life for homeless pets in Louisiana's St. Bernard Parish was no day at the dog park.

The animal shelter was a ramshackle collection of trailers, outbuildings, and outdoor cages unprotected from the weather. By some accounts, it was also a warehouse for unwanted pets, badly understaffed and constantly in need of basic repairs. There was no air-conditioning to stave off the swampy Louisiana heat, and during winter cold snaps, only a few space heaters provided warmth.

Then came Katrina, leaving unimaginable destruction in its wake and forcing a mass exodus from the flooded parish where almost every home had become uninhabitable. For nearly two years, the shelter's main building lacked its own sources of electricity and running water, relying on wires and

hoses from a FEMA trailer.

By the time Cathy Landry joined the shelter in September 2007, she was one of two people on the skeleton staff, handling cleaning and animal care while the director did everything else. "It was a nightmare. ... We had outside kennels where we had dogs housed, and they had to stay out all the time," says Landry, now the shelter's secretary. "The cats were in crates, and they were stacked three high."

But following an arduous road to recovery, the agency reached a milestone in January, opening a new facility that's nearly twice as large as its pre-Katrina operation. The \$1.25 million bill was footed by FEMA funds, insurance proceeds, and a \$250,000 grant and other in-kind assistance from The HSUS.

Now employing six people, St. Bernard can house twice the animals it once could—64 dogs and 30 cats. Dogs can move freely between indoor and outdoor runs, and they have a large play area and agility course. There are even separate ventilation systems to help keep germs from sick animals away from the rest of the population.

"The community now has a place where they can go to adopt pets and find lost animals, as well as a place that they can be

proud to call their animal shelter," says Melissa Seide Rubin, HSUS vice president for animal care centers and veterinary services.

The latest development in The HSUS's multimillion-dollar effort to help rebuild the Gulf Coast's animal services infrastructure, the relief package for the St. Bernard Animal Shelter includes joint funding (with the ASPCA and the Louisiana SPCA) of its executive director position for three years. The purchase of a new \$80,000 transport vehicle, also jointly funded by The HSUS and the ASPCA, will help the shelter bring animals to more populated areas where they will have a better chance of adoption.

As the human population has slowly regenerated—to about 60 percent of its pre-Katrina levels—so too has the number of pets. Those strays who survived the hurricane continued breeding, and many people who lost everything to the storm have not been able to afford services for their animals. With support from The HSUS, Louisiana State University veterinarians and veterinary students have helped address the problem by performing spay/neuter surgeries and providing general care at the shelter.

The building itself, though, is the jewel in the Mardi Gras crown. Beth Brewster, the agency's executive director since October 2008, views the new facility as "paradise"—easier to clean, more comfortable for the animals, a more pleasant place for staff to work and people to visit.

Its grand opening is yet another affirmation that the hurricane-ravaged St. Bernard Parish is moving on, says parish president Craig Taffaro Jr. A four-year collaboration with local, state, and national organizations—including the Louisiana SPCA and the Arlene and Joseph Meraux Charitable Foundation—has fulfilled the parish's decade-long wish to modernize its animal services operations. "You know the [saying] 'Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings?'" Taffaro asks. "That's what this is. Every time we cut a [grand-opening] ribbon, it's one more acknowledgement that our community is back. We are not going to be beaten by the storm." —*Jim Baker*



Rescue and Recovery in Haiti

In the squalid tent cities of earthquake-stricken Port-au-Prince, scrawny street dogs dove after discarded scraps of moldy food and licked up water wherever they could. They nosed through mounds of trash for their dinner and made their beds on piles of rubble. Outside town, structures for housing farm animals lay in ruins, and hungry cows and horses wandered the countryside.

Following the Jan. 12 disaster, The HSUS, Humane Society International, and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association sent several waves of responders to Haiti. Their mission: to assess the animal needs in a country where all species were trying desperately to survive.

Team members treated sick and injured dogs and administered medicines for parasites. They helped a pair of dogs make their way to their evacuated American family waiting in Florida. They guided a local

zoo in improving animals' housing and diets. They visited farms to see how livestock were faring. And they pitched in where they could to ease the staggering toll on the earthquake's human victims.

While addressing these immediate needs, HSI has also begun to turn its attention to long-term projects for helping animals in a country with no organized animal welfare groups, shelters, or veterinary schools. One such initiative is a spay/neuter program for the hundreds of thousands of street dogs, who are loosely owned by neighborhoods and villages where they beg for scraps. Other possible projects include supporting a rabies vaccination program, building a veterinary clinic, providing equine welfare training for farmers and vets, and establishing disaster preparedness protocols to help the animals stay safe in the event of future calamities.

FOR VIDEOS, field dispatches, and additional photos from the Haiti deployments, visit hsi.org.





Go With the *Flow*

An engineering feat saves beavers' lives and taxpayer money

For Sally Moore, deceptiveness is a virtue—at least when it comes to saving the beaver family inhabiting the land adjacent to her Gloucester, Va., property. She and her husband can't imagine living without the presence of the shy creatures busily maintaining the dam they built with mud, twigs, and other vegetation.

And now, thanks to water flow control devices that create a mirage around the beavers' more problematic architectural projects, the couple doesn't have to face that possibility. Moore can still delight in her dusk and dawn observations of these animals she admires as "tremendous engineers," who slap their tails on the water when she gets too close.

The dam "goes all the way across the creek, maybe about 100 to 200 feet across," Moore says. "When they hear the water going over the dam, they try to get rid of that noise, and they start building the dam higher."

Their ingenuity plays a larger role in the local ecosystem, with the pond above the dam creating fertile habitat for wood ducks, green and blue herons, owls, pileated woodpeckers, muskrats, snapping turtles, and Virginia sliders. But beavers' formidable fortresses also create problems for people. The flooding caused by their dams—thought to help shelter them from landlubbing predators—can damage nearby roads, railroad tracks, crops, build-

ings, and even wells and septic systems.

In the case of Moore's beavers, it wasn't the dam that got them into hot water. Their handyman mentality, born of an instinct to plug any leaks in their environment, caught the attention of state authorities after they started "fixing" the breaches in three culverts running beneath a nearby road. Crews from the Virginia Department of Transportation began visiting up to three times a week to clean debris the beavers had stuffed into the culverts—to no avail, says Moore: "The beaver would be right back out that night rebuilding."

The chronic culvert-clogging prompted VDOT workers to ponder killing the beavers, says Moore. Unwilling to accept this outcome, she soon found a more peaceable solution: custom-built devices that thwart beavers' leak-plugging compulsion. Known by trademarked names such as Beaver Deceivers and Castor Masters, the setup keeps the water at a level that satisfies both humans and beavers. At sites with problem dams, pipes are inserted through the dam to divert water downstream quietly so animals don't notice the breach; the end of the pipe is protected with a cage. At culverts, a fencing system is used to keep beavers away from the pipes.

The devices were the subject of ongoing research by VDOT and

112,000

beavers were killed by the USDA from 2005 to 2008, with private citizens killing countless thousands more

wildlife biologists Skip Lisle and Stephanie Boyles, who added the site near Moore's home to 26 others in their study after learning of the beavers' plight. Four years later, the humane exclusion system still works perfectly—an outcome that may be something of a surprise to the VDOT workers whom Moore remembers standing with their arms crossed during the installation, shaking their heads with skepticism and predicting failure.

That reaction is common among landowners and government officials who opt to kill beavers or destroy their dams, perhaps aware of earlier water flow control systems that were less successful or taking the shortsighted view that the up-front cost is higher than that of a bullet or trap.

Bias has long played a role in such attitudes, says Laura Simon, field director for The HSUS's Urban Wildlife program, citing wildlife agencies that have historically focused on providing opportunities for hunters and trappers. Many landowners are also all too ready to kill beavers at the first sign of flooding, Simon says, but it's often because they aren't aware of humane alternatives.

As part of her graduate thesis, Boyles set out a decade ago to gain more acceptance of these alternatives. Now a wildlife scientist at The HSUS, she was concerned about traditional methods such as body-crushing traps, which often cause excruciating deaths for animals who can hold their breath underwater for at least 15 minutes. "They are probably terrified as they fight to free themselves from a trap, and in the meantime they are suffering from lacerations and internal injuries," she says. And when a trapper removes the parents during baby-rearing season in spring and summer, "the babies will starve to death in the lodge," says Simon, who heads up The HSUS's Beaver Remedies program in Connecticut.

The killing is also pointless, as it leaves behind empty habitat that beckons new beaver families to move in. Even when the beavers are spared in favor of dam demolition, the industrious animals quickly get busy rebuilding. Simon remembers a public works director who worried about accountability to his town's mayor after he blew up a dam to the tune of about \$2,500. "There was debris all



Fencing systems prevent beavers from plugging the perceived "leaks" in culverts.



In the hollowed-out chambers of their impenetrable lodges, beaver families eat, sleep, and groom each other.

over the place ... and the beavers had built the dam right back up the next night," she says.

By contrast, nonlethal solutions can lead to significant long-term savings. Before Boyles and Lisle began their five-year project, VDOT had spent more than \$300,000 annually on repeated repairs, debris clearing, and, in some cases, beaver removal at the sites later chosen for the study. At just one of the locations, the price tag was \$154,000 in one year. Seeking to preclude the agency's plan to kill hundreds of beavers every year at locations where dams were causing water backups on roads, Lisle built 40 water flow control devices at chronic problem sites; Boyles documented their efficacy and visited once or twice a year to clear debris accumulated on culvert fences. Flooding was eliminated at all of the study sites, and the program proved a good investment, costing only about \$44,000.

In light of the success, the state plans to maintain the flow devices and install more at other sites. Boyles plans to present the Virginia project's findings to government agencies in North and South Carolina, Alabama, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

The happy endings motivate her research partner—who has never met a site he can't beaver-proof nonlethally—to keep wading through the muck and mire to deconstruct dams branch by branch and rock by rock, assessing which water flow control measures to apply.

From decks he has built above installations, Lisle enjoys a bird's-eye perspective of the abundant life thriving in beaver habitat. Near his own property in Vermont, where he installed a flow device more than 30 years ago, the number of lodges continues to grow, and a once-sterile environment now teems with spring peepers, gray tree frogs, newts, and spotted salamanders.

"Humans have created this problem by putting roads everywhere throughout ancient beaver habitat," Lisle says. "Ideally, we take that into account and take responsibility for finding reasonable and enduring solutions. ... To take a gun or a trap and kill something takes little imagination, but to sneak water through a dam is fun and takes great imagination." Surely nature's most ingenious engineers would agree.

—Ruthanne Johnson

Wheels of Injustice

Patrick Kwan can look out his office window and see an iconic Manhattan image: horses pulling carriages through the metropolis. But for The HSUS's New York state director, the scene is anything but idyllic.

"Our New York City office is right by Central Park," says Kwan, "and we definitely see day in and day out how mixing horses and traffic is an inhumane and dangerous combination."

The horses often labor in extreme heat or bitter cold, despite a law against forcing them to work in adverse weather conditions. They breathe exhaust fumes and must contend with motorized forms of transport, which can spook them and result in accidents that are sometimes fatal, Kwan notes. They stand for hours with no shelter



from the elements and walk on pavement that takes a toll on their legs.

Many people assume the carriage horses live in the park and get to frolic there after working hours, but in fact many of

them are warehoused on the west side of Manhattan in stalls that Kwan says barely allow them to lie down. Carriage horse companies, rather than taking care of retired horses for life, frequently sell them for slaughter.

But an innovative proposal has arisen to bring an alternative cruelty-free icon to the city's landscape within three years. An organization called New Yorkers for Clean, Livable and Safe Streets is urging the New York City Council to replace carriage horses with hybrid-electric replicas of classic cars. The plan would provide jobs for carriage horse drivers and afford passengers a feeling of nostalgia without the associated cruelties. The cars would travel slowly on their tours of the park but keep pace with traffic on the roads, notes Jared Rosen, executive director of NYCLASS.

The HSUS supports the new proposal, as well as a bill the city council has considered since 2007 that calls for an immediate ban on the anachronistic and cruel practice.

—James Hettinger



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Love Birds

United by their troubled pasts, two mute swans took to the skies in January after honeymooning at The HSUS's Cape Wildlife Center in Barnstable, Mass. A month earlier, local police had found the male swan on the side of a road, flapping his wings in defense of his previous mate, who lay immobile and hurt.

While antibiotics helped him recover from a joint infection, nothing could fix his loneliness when staff were unable to save his friend. Until, that is, he gained a new devotee, another female swan who'd been mending at the center from wounds inflicted by a passing vehicle. Healing quickly commenced, says staff veterinarian Roberto Aguilar, the pair even began calling to each other when separated, and the stage was set for their mid-January release at Barnstable Harbor.

"We're hoping they are bonded and that they're able to find a nice pond and establish their territory before spring," Aguilar says. "But where they go from here, and even if they stay together, will be up to them."

FROM TOP: MARY ALT/AFR/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS; HEATHER FONE/THE HSUS