

**W**e at The HSUS see a tremendous amount of human-caused cruelty to animals. Whether it is illegal or institutionalized—whether it's dogfighting, the extreme confinement of pigs or chickens on factory farms, or the poisoning of rabbits or guinea pigs in duplicative animal tests—we spend every day battling to stop intentional acts of cruelty. There are better ways for people to conduct business and their daily lives than to inflict pain on other creatures. Animals are sensitive, feeling beings, not discards or commodities. At a time when so many alternatives are available to us—including faux fur coats, plant-based foods, and alternatives to animal testing—it's our duty to make the right choices and to do the least harm.

As if this task of checking deliberate animal exploitation were not enough, we also must deal with the accidental or incidental harm that results from the normal functioning of modern society, such as residential or commercial development projects that destroy habitat and crush or displace wildlife, or motor vehicles that strike animals crossing the road at just the wrong moment. It's almost never the intention of developers or drivers to injure or kill, but that's the practical effect of our immensely large human footprint—the collateral damage of our successful and adaptive species. While we may never be able to eliminate these sorts of impacts, we can mitigate them, whether by “smart growth” policies or by simply driving more cautiously, or driving less.

In addition to these routine practices, there are other human actions and activities that can produce cataclysmic impacts on animals. That's the case with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

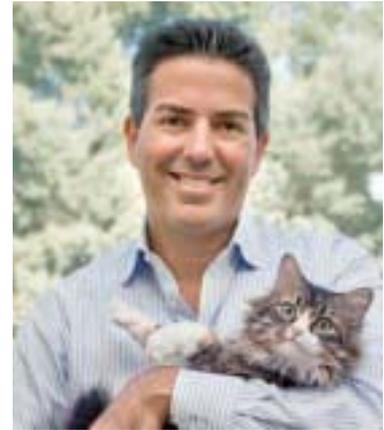
We can be certain that BP did not want this spill. It's resulted in irreparable harm to the brand of this company, along with cleanup costs and liabilities that will run into the many billions of dollars. There can be no question, however, that BP erred in not taking the necessary precautions in its operations and in not preparing for an incident in mile-deep waters.

By mid-June, the broken Deepwater Horizon rig was spewing crude at an astonishing rate—perhaps 60,000 barrels a day. Every four or five days, it was expelling as much oil as the tanker that spilled more than 10 million gallons of crude into the Gulf of Valdez more than two decades ago. Today, dig just below the coastal surface in that region of Alaska, and you'll still find crude mixed with dirt.

Recently, I traveled throughout the Gulf Coast with a team of experts that The HSUS pulled together to assess the damage. I visited rookeries teeming with thousands of nesting birds, walked along the beaches of oil-stained barrier islands, and surveyed a maze of marshlands off Louisiana's coast. The spreading menace of oil was permeating this entire region, propelled by winds and waves, and debilitating and killing birds, turtles, dolphins, and other creatures in this highly sensitive marine environment.

While the federal government has mounted a robust containment, cleanup, and rescue effort, it is not enough. The HSUS and other groups are needed there to augment the government's effort. We at The HSUS have great capabilities in wildlife care, with a substantial wildlife department and three wildlife care centers of our own. As I write this, we are planning in the weeks ahead to offer to deploy our assets and also draw on the talents and experience of the nation's entire wildlife rehabilitation community to aid in the effort.

We'll not be able to bring relief to all of the creatures in crisis—in fact, we are already too late for some. But we'll work as hard as we can to save every life. As The HSUS and the nation confront one of the worst disasters in our country's history, we'll need your support more than ever. Thank you for standing with us, and for fighting for the creatures who depend on every effort.



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