Relief for Missouri’s Dogs

Every evening. Tessa leaps onto the bed, where her owner rolls over, cups the Yorkshire terrier’s head in her hand, and gives a goodnight kiss. “She expects that every night,” says Marva Bulva, a retired waitress.

Come morning, Tessa races around the house, from the kitchen to the bedroom and back again. And she never misses dinner-time, waiting patiently for a handout. As Bulva says, “she’s spoiled rotten.”

Certainly, she deserves it: Tessa spent her first six years confined to the hells of a Greene County, Mo., puppy mill. When she was rescued in 2009 by the Humane Society of Missouri, her hair was so matted that her back legs were snarled together. Her toenails curled into her foot pads. She had fleas, ear mites, and gum disease so severe that all but one of her teeth were eventually pulled.

Such poor treatment is par for the course at the nation’s 10,000 puppy mills, 3,000 of which are in Missouri, pumping out puppies for Internet sales and pet stores. “They’re not taking care of these baby dogs,” Bulva says. “I don’t care whether it’s a German shepherd or a Mexican Chihuahua; you just don’t do animals that way.”

But thanks to Bulva’s fellow Missourians, puppy mills in her state will soon be held to higher standards. Passed in November by almost 52 percent of voters, the Proposition B ballot initiative limits operations to 50 breeding dogs and requires that breeders provide sufficient food, water, shelter, and veterinary care. Other requirements include rest between breeding cycles, solid flooring, unfettered access to an outside run, and space to turn around, lie down, and stretch freely. The HSUS led the campaign for passage, supported by local shelters, the Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation, Tony La Russa’s Animal Rescue Foundation, the ASPCA, and Best Friends Animal Society.

While legislatures in 15 other states have passed tougher laws against puppy mills during the last three years, Prop B was the first citizen-led measure ever attempted on the issue. “The legislature had refused to do anything to stop puppy mill abuse before Prop B,” says Kathleen Summers, manager of the HSUS Puppy Mills Campaign. “And that’s why we had to take it to the people.”

Nearly a million voted for the measure—in a state known to advocates as the puppy mill capital of the country. With about 1 million puppies produced there annually and shipped to consumers across the U.S., “the win here has ripple effects nationwide,” says Barbara Schmitz, the HSUS Missouri state director and leader of the campaign.

The results will also be felt close to home by shelters that bear the burden of caring for neglected animals rescued from the state’s puppy mills. The Humane Society of Missouri alone takes in about 300 puppy mill dogs each year, seized from facilities targeted by local authorities like the one where Tessa was found. When the dogs first arrive, shelter staff immediately go to work easing their pain, washing away months or even years of accumulated filth, and helping them feel more comfortable in preparation for finding new homes.

When Prop B takes effect in November 2011, the need for these rescue missions will be curtailed. “For the state and for the animals, this was monumental,” says Debbie Hill, the shelter’s vice president of operations. “It was a huge leap forward, really sort of coming out of a damp, dark, smelly place—hopefully into light and fresh air, literally, for thousands of animals who have really been kept in horrible conditions for many, many years.”

—Michael Sharp

Preserving Our Right to Protect Wildlife: Time and again, Arizona voters have taken action for animals through their ballot initiative process: banning steel-jaw leghold traps, making cockfighting a felony, and outlawing small crates for breeding pigs and veal calves.

This November, they shot down a National Rifle Association–backed measure that would have made hunting the preferred method of wildlife control, transferred authority for regulating hunting and fishing from the Game and Fish Commission to the state legislature, and threatened Arizona’s ballot initiative process for wildlife issues.

The HSUS joined a coalition of animal advocates working to stop the power grab by politicians and trophy hunters. Notes Andrew Page, senior director of The HSUS’s Wildlife Abuse Campaign, “The people of Arizona sent the NRA and other trophy hunters a strong message that they’re not going to tolerate this attack on our voting rights to protect wildlife.”
Laura Maloney has seen a whole lot of things you just don’t want to know about. “Hog-dogging, for instance,” says Maloney. “That’s when a pig is released in an arena and a pit bull takes it down. It’s very common in the rural South.”

Then there’s dogfighting and cockfighting. One hopes you’ve seen neither. They were once new to Maloney, too. But after moving to New Orleans in 1997, she found herself immersed in an unfamiliar culture where animal fighting was sanctioned by the state and cruelty was largely ignored.

There was more. The city had an enormous stray population. Dog packs roamed the streets. Euthanasia rates were off the charts, adoption numbers low. Within 10 years, several directors had come and gone at the Louisiana SPCA. Given the city’s inherent problems, running a shelter seemed a no-win job.

In other words, for a woman like Maloney, it was perfect. “I was blown away by the problems the shelter faced. One thousand unwanted animals coming in each month. Suddenly, it hit me like a hammer. This was the work I wanted to do.”

She focused on reducing euthanasia; increasing adoptions; achieving financial stability; galvanizing resources for more spay/neuter campaigns, humane education, and feral cat initiatives; and investigating dogfighting and other forms of broad-scale, institutionalized cruelty across the state.

That’s all.

Inevitably, with some blood sports still legal in Louisiana, lasting change would depend on changing laws. Never mind that Maloney had no prior dealings with a state legislature. She was, and remains, a woman who thrives on building consensus and bringing disparate groups to the table. A few years into her new job, the culturally entrenched sport of hog-dog fighting was banned. “People were stunned that we took that on and won.”

While the Louisiana SPCA aggressively enforced laws against dogfighting, cockfighting was still a legal form of entertainment in the Bayou State. Maloney’s organization joined forces with The HSUS and pulled off another stunning victory in 2007, when state legislators voted to outlaw the blood sport.

It’s no surprise that caring and advo-
cating for animals is overwhelmingly demanding work. Crisis is an everyday thing. Catastrophe, though, is quite another.

Even in fair-weather times at the shelter, animal suffering was a constant presence. Lives invariably hung in the balance, and Maloney faced that awareness every day on the job. “I used to think to myself, ‘If I’m not effective, animals will die.’”

In 2005, that feeling took on even greater urgency in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. But effectiveness was in short supply in the ensuing chaos. All of Maloney’s rescue staff suffered personal losses, the SPCA facility was gone, and rescue groups from around the country were at each other’s throats. Everyone from FEMA to city and state politicians vied for her attention.

As months passed and catastrophe gave way to bone-wearying crisis, Maloney and her staff stayed in emergency mode for two years. While restoring operations, she led a $10 million fundraising campaign to build the SPCA’s new home. Perhaps closest to her heart, she lobbied successfully for a law that requires parishes to have an evacuation plan for pets and service animals.

Maloney did none of this alone. “From the moment I met them, the staff did wonders with the resources available to them,” she says. “During Katrina, they put their lives on hold and focused on the animals and community.”

Never once during the ordeal did she think of leaving New Orleans. But Fortune, writes Shakespeare, “brings in some boats that are not steered.” When her husband was offered a job in Australia, Maloney chose to go.

And so began an odyssey with altogether new challenges: as a consultant for Zoos Victoria, senior vice president of anti-cruelty initiatives at the ASPCA in Manhattan, and until August, senior vice president of strategic initiatives and communications at the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA. Life was a whirlwind and time flew by; and yet, there was always Katrina.

“I felt guilty I wasn’t there,” she says now about leaving New Orleans. “It was like a death I wasn’t prepared for. I’d lost the city I loved, the life I loved, the job I loved. I really hadn’t dealt with the loss.”

Like a combat soldier confronted with the ordinariness of civilian life, Maloney missed the front lines. And though the San Diego Humane Society was one of the country’s most outstanding organizations, she wanted to drive change at a national level. Always a leader, ever a soldier, she hankered to lead the charge.

This past summer, Maloney was offered the chance to join an organization with serious muscle, one that affects animal welfare on a world stage. The position would draw on her expertise with a range of species, capitalize on her ability to build consensus, and continue her commitment to change laws and advocate for those who have no voice.

The HSUS was a perfect fit. Calling Maloney “a remarkable leader,” HSUS President and CEO Wayne Pacelle says he’s thrilled to have her on staff. “I’ve worked alongside Laura in Louisiana during the effort to rescue animals following Hurricane Katrina, and in the battle to outlaw cockfighting in the state,” he says, “and I have seen her excel in all the areas where she’s focused her attentions.”

Joining The HSUS is the culmination of Maloney’s post-Katrina journey, she says: “I view this as coming full circle.” You can hear the smile in her voice as she considers where she’s landed.

“I’ve thrown myself back in the fray.”

— Ketzel Levine

FREELANCE WRITER Ketzel Levine met Laura Maloney at a Louisiana emergency animal shelter while reporting on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina for NPR. Five years later, she couldn’t wait to narrate the next chapter in Maloney’s story.
Forging a Revolution for Farm Animals

**America is finally confronting the suffering** behind its meat-heavy diet. In the past decade, seven states have enacted laws to improve treatment of farm animals. Scores of local governments have approved resolutions encouraging people to cut back on animal products. And major businesses have followed suit: Kraft Foods, the world’s second-largest food company, has announced they’ll start using cage-free eggs, rather than eggs from hens raised in battery cages so small the animals can’t spread their wings. Compass Group, the nation’s largest food service provider, began doing so in 2007.

Leading the charge is The HSUS’s Factory Farming Campaign. The successful state legislation and ballot initiatives—codifying everything from more space for chickens, pigs, and calves to bans on the docking of dairy cows’ tails and the force-feeding of ducks—represent a growing trend: “This sets an important precedent that we are able to restrain ourselves when it comes to the virtually total power we have over farm animals,” says the campaign’s senior director, Paul Shapiro. “We’re seeing a real shift in our consciousness.”

Science supports more humane treatment for sentient creatures. “Chickens are in some ways as smart as chimpanzees,” says K-lynn Smith of Australia’s Macquarie University, whose research reveals the birds’ sophisticated language. Health scares have bolstered arguments for better conditions; last year’s salmonella outbreaks caused by contaminated eggs from two Iowa factory farms added to ample evidence linking battery cages to increased risk.

But the main force behind the wave of action is compassion, says Dr. Michael Greger, HSUS director of public health and animal agriculture. During the 2008 campaign for Proposition 2 in California, opponents argued incorrectly but forcefully that allowing animals to lie down, stand up, extend their limbs, and turn around would endanger food safety. Voters didn’t buy it. “People don’t want to see animals treated this way,” Greger says.

— Karen E. Lange

**Voting Against Cruelty**

Bans on confinement and inhumane treatment are filling gaps in federal and state laws, which have traditionally covered only transport of animals, slaughter of livestock, and certain individual cases of abuse. Legislatures in Oregon, Colorado, Maine, and most recently Michigan have approved measures that The HSUS helped negotiate. When lawmakers block animal protection measures, The HSUS turns to voters. Ballot initiatives that protect farm animals have passed in Florida, Arizona, and most recently California, where residents voted to outlaw gestation crates for sows, veal crates for calves, and battery cages for chickens. Next up were legislative bans on docking cows’ tails and selling battery-cage eggs regardless of where they’re produced. Even industry groups that support inhumane practices have taken note of the unstoppable momentum: “In the last five years,” an Animal Ag Alliance executive told a Colorado newspaper, “it’s been like a wildfire.”
Grassroots Appeal  It took plenty of “polite persistence,” including thousands of signatures, e-mails, and calls—but within a year of The HSUS’s enlistment of advocate John Moyer in a campaign, the city of Tampa had passed a resolution opposing battery cages. An HSUS DVD exposing the suffering helped win over council members, including the one who introduced the measure in 2008. “He was appalled,” says Moyer, now outreach coordinator for The HSUS’s Puppy Mills Campaign. “He said he had no idea what these animals go through.” A dozen other cities—five in Florida—have approved resolutions against battery cages. In 2009, Pittsfield, Mass., outlawed gestation and veal crates and battery cages. Though it had no direct impact on farms, which lie outside city limits, this type of action brings attention to inhumane conditions, an outcome essential to change, says Shapiro. “Our biggest enemy is ignorance.”

Cruelty in the Spotlight A 2008 HSUS exposé of a California slaughterhouse’s brutal treatment of dairy cows led to reforms spearheaded in the nation’s capital: the largest meat recall in U.S. history and a federal ban on slaughtering adult downed cows. The U.S. Justice Department joined The HSUS in suing the slaughterhouse owners for selling meat from downed animals to the national school lunch program. The organization has also taken on other factory farming practices in federal court, last year winning its lawsuit charging Hudson Valley Foie Gras with Clean Water Act violations. Such exposure spurs a cultural shift; researchers have found that pork and poultry consumption drop following news coverage of farm animal issues, which is largely driven by The HSUS’s investigations and ballot initiatives. It’s a trend with staying power: Seven public school systems, 41 colleges and universities, and 55 restaurants now participate in “Meatless Mondays,” offering plant-based meals once a week.

Corporate Conscience Subway may soon serve up a more humane menu, after the Milford, Ct.–based company pledged to become the first major fast food chain to buy only cage-free eggs. Wal-Mart also announced that its private label line uses 100 percent cage-free eggs, while Unilever purchases them exclusively for its Hellmann’s Light Mayonnaise and plans to follow suit with the rest of its mayo products, which use 350 million eggs a year. Other businesses, hospitals, and hundreds of U.S. campuses have made the switch with encouragement from The HSUS, which meets with stakeholders and often purchases stock so it can push for change as a shareholder. They’re also reacting to public sentiment: A poll funded by the American Farm Bureau found that 95 percent of Americans believe farm animals should be well cared for.

“I was troubled to learn from my friends at The Humane Society of the United States about the practice of confining egg-laying hens in tiny cages. ... Turning these defenseless animals into egg-producing machines with no consideration for their welfare whatsoever is a degradation of our own humanity.”

— THE DALAI LAMA, AUGUST 2010
Lobo sat frozen in his crate in the gymnasium of the Montana Women’s Prison. HSUS rescuers had recently removed the 6-year-old Australian shepherd mix from a home 250 miles away, where he’d been living with nearly 100 dogs. At the prison, Lobo would soon prepare for eventual adoption by learning obedience and coping skills from inmates selected as trainers in the Prison Paws for Humanity program. But years of living without human interaction, and of fighting packs of nearly feral dogs for his food, left him shell-shocked in the new environment. “He wasn’t moving his head, just his eyes. He didn’t know what to do,” says inmate Tiffanie Fitzpatrick. “I sat there with him, trying to build that bond.” Back in Fitzpatrick’s room, Lobo would hide under the bed, cowering whenever someone tried to pet him. Evidence of the brutal hierarchy in his previous home abounded: “We found scars everywhere on his body when we first bathed him,” she says.

Under the tutelage of Fitzpatrick and inmate Jazmen Whaley, Lobo’s personality began to emerge. The first time he really romped in the play yard, Fitzpatrick notes, he crouched down with his wagging bottom in the air, seeming to grin from ear to ear. He even learned to take a treat from Whaley’s mouth: “He puts his arms up on my shoulders and licks my nose,” she says. “He’s meek and mild-mannered.”

Inmate Emily James has rehabilitated Leo, whom rescuers found panting and shivering in a debris-filled garage on the hoarder’s property. Along the way, she’s learned about putting another’s needs before her own. “It’s such a great feeling to know that I’m there for him. He looks at me in a way that I don’t think I’ve ever been looked at by anybody.”

The Montana dogs aren’t the only ones benefiting from prison time. In Jackson, La., The HSUS helped fund the construction of a shelter built by inmates on the grounds of the Dixon Correctional Institute, along with a barn to temporarily house animals during disasters.

Prisoners who clean kennels, walk dogs, and feed and groom animals consider the job a perk, and not just for the skills it provides, says Deb Parsons-Drake, senior director of animal care centers for The HSUS. “They have learned how much animal interaction provides comfort and chills them out,” she says, “and helps them deal with whatever problems put them in prison in the first place.” Maybe that’s because the dogs don’t judge the men, even though they’re wearing prison uniforms, says warden Steve Rader: “They don’t care if he’s got a number.”

In 2005, Rader observed similar bonds during an experience that planted the seeds for collaboration on the project. In the weeks after Hurricane Katrina, The HSUS’s temporary shelter in Gonzalez, La., filled up with strays and pets rescued from the flooded region. Prison officials offered to help, and hundreds of animals were soon on their way to a converted dairy barn on prison grounds, where inmates walked dogs and even played Frisbee. “A lot of guys really enjoyed it,” Rader says. “They said, ‘If you ever get dogs, I want to work with them again!’ … They didn’t care how many hours they worked out there at that old barn; they just love animals.”

— Ruthanne Johnson and Jim Baker
Setting Down Roots in Haiti

Amid so much human suffering in Haiti, justifying the expense of medical care for dogs can be a challenging task. But Chris Broughton-Bossong, Haiti program coordinator for Humane Society International, tells wary residents it’s for their own health, too. “That dog might have worms and parasites in [his] stomach that are getting into your water,” he explains when speaking to impoverished inhabitants of tent cities. “It’s not that I’m picking him over you, but I’m trying to stop this before it gets to you.”

Skepticism about vet care is just one perception that Broughton-Bossong has worked to reshape since arriving last April after the country’s devastating earthquake. While training vets to respond to disasters and provide better care for working animals, he strives to demonstrate HSI’s long-term commitment and win over residents accustomed to temporary stays by aid groups, tied to peaks of panic in the 24-hour news cycle. When Hurricane Tomas blew through in November, Broughton-Bossong contacted the country’s vets, suggesting they take to the airwaves with advice on keeping animals safe. “We got this amazing response [from] people calling back and saying, ‘I just set up an interview with the radio station tomorrow morning; I’m mobilizing everyone in my region tonight.’”

The week before, HSI had joined with Best Friends Animal Society and Christian Veterinary Mission to hold a teaching clinic in a vacant hotel that HSI is converting into an animal hospital and training facility. Sixteen Haitian vets learned how to spay and neuter dogs from local villages and to set up field clinics in their home regions. With their previous training focused on farm animals, they were excited to acquire new skills after learning about the role of dog population control in rabies prevention.

Broughton-Bossong was particularly moved by the sight of vets “who had never thought to hold a dog any longer than necessary” stroking their patients’ heads as they awoke from anesthesia. HSI assistant Jean-Claude Cesaire, a Haitian native, says he looks forward to a career with HSI “because I really love the work they are doing in Haiti. I love animals and I also want to change the [perception] in Haiti to say that the animals are our friends; we need them. … We need to protect them.”

— Arna Cohen

Talking Spay/Neuter in the Gulf

The line had formed outside the Jefferson Parish Animal Shelter in Marrero, La., by sunrise one Saturday in October. The people were waiting not to give up their pets, but to enter a free vaccination and microchip clinic opening at 10 a.m. Ultimately, 1,500 pet owners would stream through the doors, taking home spay/neuter vouchers and donated pet food.

The event was one of seven held in Mississippi and Louisiana over the last year at new low-cost spay/neuter clinics built and advertised with the help of HSUS funds. The outreach is part of an HSUS initiative to reduce euthanasia rates at shelters in a region battered by Hurricane Katrina, the recession, and the oil spill.

The clinics create a backdrop for talking to pet owners about how spay/neuter can save lives by preventing births of animals who may end up in shelters. “In the deep South, there’s just not a lot of really good frame of reference on spay/neuter,” says Amanda Arrington, HSUS manager of spay/neuter initiatives. “Their parents didn’t do it. Their friends don’t do it.”

The conversations seem to be effective: Vouchers are snatched up and surgeries booked sometimes weeks in advance. Two roommates attending a Lafayette clinic had been preventing litters through constant juggling of their multiple dogs to keep the males and females segregated, says Cory Smith, director of the HSUS Humane Communities program. “They shrieked with delight when they were given the spay/neuter vouchers,” she says. “They had wanted to get them fixed for so long and had not been able to afford it.”

— Arna Cohen
Business as Usual  |  Widespread suffering revealed at million-chicken egg facility

Wandering among rows of hens stacked three cages high at a massive egg factory last fall, an HSUS investigator passed one bird whose plight made him stop in his survey of the filth and suffering. Her broken leg was a common injury; hens can get tangled in the rusty wire mesh of factory farm cages and snap bones weakened by osteoporosis from laying so many eggs. Her fate unaided was clear: Injured hens, unable to reach water or food and trampled by their cagemates, endure slow deaths. The investigator regularly saw their rotting corpses during his 28 days at the million-chicken Texas facility owned by Cal-Maine Foods, the country’s largest egg producer.

And so the investigator paused every morning to hand-feed the hen he’d named Sunshine and lift her to the water container at the top of her cage. He watched her stand on her one good leg, trying to balance and spread her wings. He held her, and she lay calm in his arms.

The investigator couldn’t immediately change the conditions he witnessed: hens with uteruses protruding from their bodies or feet bloodied by the cages; escaped chickens running through liquid manure pits; birds and eggs covered in chicken waste; barns thick with flies. But he could relieve a bit of the misery for a few birds like Sunshine.

“Chickens are just like any other animal; they have feelings,” he says. “They thought I was going to do the thing everyone else did—just keep on walking. I tried to help.”

Cal-Maine, which supplies supermarket chains such as H-E-B and Publix, defended the conditions by saying it follows industry guidelines. But those guidelines allow for just 67 square inches of living space per hen—translating into flock sizes so huge that it’s impossible to look after the animals as individual beings. At the Waelder facility, four “housekeepers” were expected to care for about 240,000 animals each.

Seeking changes to these industry norms, The HSUS is calling for producers to rapidly phase out cages and persuading retailers and consumers to switch to cage-free eggs. Since studies have shown a link between cage confinement and salmonella, The HSUS is also pressing the FDA and USDA to institute reforms that will better protect animal welfare and the nation’s food supply.

Shortly after sharing the results of the Cal-Maine investigation, The HSUS revealed routine abuses at the nation’s largest turkey hatchery, Willmar Poultry Company in Minnesota. An undercover investigator last October saw newly hatched turkeys left to suffer for hours before dying, while sick, deformed, and injured birds were thrown alive into grinding machines, along with healthy baby turkeys not needed for buyers’ orders.

The disturbing reality of factory farms is too often lost on consumers who see only the end products, says the Cal-Maine investigator. “It makes me angry for people who buy these products in the grocery stores, where everything is bright and clean. The barns are not bright. They’re not clean. It’s not at all what it seems.” — Karen E. Lange

False Advertising  Perdue chickens labeled “Humanely Raised” are anything but. At the slaughterhouse, the birds are shackled upside down, submerged in stun vats of electrified water, moved on conveyor belts to neck-cutting machines, then plunged, sometimes still conscious, into vats of scalding water, says a class-action lawsuit The HSUS helped file in November on behalf of consumers. The legal action seeks to force the country’s third-largest poultry producer to stop deceptively marketing its premium-priced Harvestland brand and some of its Perdue brand chicken. Like most of the poultry industry, Perdue refuses to kill chickens more humanely by putting them to sleep through a method called controlled atmosphere killing. The company also disrupts their sleep, transports them on cramped trucks in extreme temperatures without food or water, and uses breeding practices that cause painful bone deformities and cardiovascular problems.