

Humane Milestones



This season, we're celebrating a golden anniversary in the history of The HSUS. It was 50 years ago—on Oct. 20, 1962, at Tan-Tar-a, in Osage Beach, Mo.—that The HSUS sponsored its first national conference.

This event brought together local-level advocates and animal sheltering professionals, along with HSUS staff and board members. Tan-Tar-A “was filled to capacity and the crowd overflowed into adjacent motels,” wrote HSUS president Robert Chenoweth in the November 1962 *HSUS News*. “The conferees were of the highest quality, comprising the leadership of influential humane societies in every part of the United States.”

The conference focused on six major problems: 1) the breeding of more dogs and cats than can ever have homes; 2) cruelties to laboratory animals; 3) cruelties to agricultural livestock and wildlife; 4) standards and policies of humane societies; 5) humane education, particularly of children; and 6) financing of both local and national anti-cruelty programs.

As this agenda shows, The HSUS has always had an expansive view of animal protection, seeking to build the capacity of other humane organizations, while also lifting the sights of the broader animal care and control community to the full range of humane issues. We worked together with local societies to secure both the Humane Slaughter Act of 1958, which prohibited certain painful and cruel means of livestock slaughter, and the 1966 Laboratory Animal Welfare Act, which curtailed the theft of pets for the laboratory animal trade and laid the groundwork for future protection of animals in research, testing, and education.

Today, of course, we continue to work with local and regional humane organizations, just as we continue to cooperate in broad-based efforts to reduce animal overpopulation through spaying and neutering, promoting adoption, and supporting the expansion and professionalization of the humane movement. Animal Care Expo, a direct descendant of the 1962 conference, is the marquee event serving the animal sheltering and rescue community. It now draws participants from 75 countries, helping to build a global movement for animal protection.

We are involved with other conferences invaluable to the field, like “The Outdoor Cat: Science and Policy from a Global Perspective” this December, an event that will bring together many stakeholders interested in the range of issues stemming from the presence of millions of free-roaming, abandoned, and feral cats in our communities.

Animal Sheltering magazine is itself a true fixture of our collective efforts to help companion animals, and to advance the work of our nation's animal care and rescue enterprises. Every serious social reform movement needs its journals, as an ongoing platform to debate and discuss, and to disseminate and drive, emerging ideas in our field.

In this issue, you'll find a feature on compassion fatigue—a form of post-traumatic stress disorder tied to long-term exposure to trauma and suffering, in people or in animals. We all experience down moments that stem from the knowledge and details of animal abuse and death. But when such feelings become chronic, or so taxing that they produce a deterioration in our emotional health or reduce our sense of hopefulness, then we need to address it proactively. We've all seen this phenomenon in our friends and colleagues, from time to time, and I think that it's really healthy that it is out in the open as a topic of discussion in our field.

We at The HSUS believe we've got to confront threats to our movement, including burnout; the emotional costs of caring have to be confronted, managed, and mitigated. Animals need us—all of us—and we have to take every measure to keep our colleagues, fellow advocates, and ourselves energized for the hard work of animal care and social reform that we carry out. There are ways to cope with our personal challenges, and there are resources available to those who are feeling these strains and tensions, and may be looking for help.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Pacelle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne Pacelle, President & CEO
The Humane Society of the United States