A
mong the many issues currently addressed by The HSUS and other animal-activist organizations, none is as volatile as that involving the use of animals for biomedical research and other various testing procedures. Although the reasons for this controversy are many and varied, foremost among them is the inherent difficulty society has had in making decisions concerning animal welfare and human health. There has been a tendency to pit one against the other as though the two could not coexist.

This has led to a perceived dichotomy and adversarial relationship between the scientific and animal-protection communities. Yet, it is our contention that animal-protection organizations can and should have a positive impact on the scientific community and society by serving as a stimulus for changes that would otherwise be unlikely to occur. Among these changes in legislation such as the Animal Welfare Act which, despite its many shortcomings, represents a step in the right direction, as has been acknowledged by both the medical and veterinary community. The chairman of this council is Dr. David Webers, a noted neurologist and academic professor who also serves on the board of directors of The HSUS. In his article “Healing Society’s Relationship with Animals,” found on page 26 of this issue, Dr. Webers makes the case that, although “there are distinct and major differences between humans and other animals” there is also “a considerable amount of evidence to suggest, even by human definitions, that the most important and enduring element in humans and animals may be those elements which differ the least.” He then concludes that “human-kind’s superior intelligence and capacity for making moral judgments does not confer upon us the right to exploit other species (or for that matter other humans with lesser intellectual capacity), but rather a responsibility to show compassion for them and assist them.”

In another article, found on page 19, Robert Welborn, a distinguished attorney and member of the HSUS board of directors, describes his experience as a member of the Institutional Animal Committee of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. Having resigned from the committee relatively recently, Mr. Welborn has long agonized over the moral justification for the infliction of suffering on animals for the benefit of humans and has concluded that “if animals are to be used for these purposes, certainly it must be with respect, compassion, and gratitude, knowing that these are sentient creatures experiencing pain and stress for assumed human benefit.”

The HSUS is grateful for these dedicated persons whose personal work, experiences, and convictions greatly enlarge the capacity of The HSUS to be a more effective advocate for animals.