

Recognizing Our Responsibility

A breeding moratorium will work

This year our family worked its way through a painful ordeal. We said goodbye to an old friend we had rescued from the streets of Washington, D.C. Huxley, a fourteen-year-old Siberian husky, had grown up with our children and was a member of the family. When he suffered the ravages of old age—bone cancer and tumors—we made the decision to say goodbye. It did not come easily. It will take a long time to fill the emptiness the loss of Huxley has created. The one thing that makes it bearable is our knowledge that he lived a happy, long life—filled with love. Fourteen is old for a husky, and Huxley made the most of every minute of his long life. But, as you and I know, millions of dogs and cats in our country never know a life of well-being and love: each day, thousands of them are killed in shelters. These shelters are filled with the unwanted, the forgotten, the discarded. Their lives end far short of their natural span. These are not the Huxleys of our homes; they are the victims of pet overpopulation.

Recognizing our responsibility for companion animals, The HSUS has called for a one-year, voluntary moratorium on the breeding of dogs and cats. When the moratorium was announced in March, hundreds of media outlets reported the story. *USA Today*, for example, featured the moratorium on its front page and expressed its support in an editorial.

A one-year, voluntary breeding moratorium is simple and straightforward, and it will work. I choose to honor it, and I hope you will too. If enough people participate in the moratorium, we will surely take a big step forward in the battle to end this country's companion-animal overpopulation problem, a problem that is created one litter, one animal, at a time. HSUS members number hundreds of thousands; if all of us—and thousands more concerned people—observed the moratorium, it would make a profound difference.

Some critics of the moratorium have claimed that The HSUS seeks to eliminate companion animals from our homes and our

lives. Nothing could be further from the truth, and the statement's absurdity and viciousness are scarcely worth comment. The moratorium is a forthright and pragmatic attempt to further our primary goal—reducing animal suffering. Unfortunately, ideas and ideals worthy of thoughtful consideration are often publicly attacked and ridiculed by individuals and organizations with vested interests, which they attempt to further by using distortion and, in some instances, outright falsehood. The HSUS has a consistent and honorable record of seeking to educate everyone we can reach with the message of responsible pet ownership. Our efforts are summarized in a new publication, *52 Simple Things You Can Do to Help End Pet Overpopulation*, which we released in March, when the moratorium was announced. The book recommends spaying and neutering of companion animals, enactment of enlightened municipal regulations, and fifty other actions that make for responsible pet ownership.

Critics have further suggested that the moratorium is misguided because, during it, only irresponsible breeders and pet owners will be providing pet-seekers with puppies and kittens. However, irresponsible people will be controlled only through legislation, regulation, and enforcement—not through voluntary efforts and persuasion. Dog and cat fanciers, companion-animal registries, veterinarians, animal-control personnel, and humane organizations must work together to gain the necessary laws and regulations. We believe a successful breeding moratorium will complement such efforts.

Many people have applauded the moratorium as a sensible and much needed initiative, and it has been endorsed by hundreds of organizations nationwide. The companion animals—the Huxleys—who share our lives should remind us how crucial it is for the moratorium to succeed. We must create a society in which no pet is treated as a throw-away object and every pet is guaranteed a loving home. Nothing less is acceptable. ■



Paul G. Irwin, President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul G. Irwin". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.