

July 11, 2005

Wayne Pacelle
The Humane Society of the United States
2100 L Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20037

Dear Mr. Pacelle,

Many of us were hopeful that the era of reactionary policies which has defined the Companion Animal Division of the Humane Society of the United States for several decades would come to an end with your arrival as the agency's new chief. We had hoped that you would bring the same enthusiasm, progressive standards and commitment to end killing to the field of sheltered animals, as you do for wildlife, farmed animals and others. But given what we have seen coming out of the Division to date, we have so far been very disappointed.

For the last fifteen years, HSUS has fought the efforts of grassroots activists to bring about an end to the era of mass killing in U.S. animal shelters. These include:

- Opposing plans to establish a TNR program on the Georgetown University campus;
- Endorsing the round up and killing of feral cats at Riverside Park in Virginia;
- Writing a local prosecutor in the Outer Banks of North Carolina arguing that TNR violated state laws against abandonment, essentially making the argument that feral cat caretakers there should be jailed;
- Coining the phrase "subsidized abandonment" to describe TNR;
- Calling TNR "inhumane";
- Unfairly inflating the death rate for dogs and cats killed in San Francisco shelters to downplay the success of No Kill efforts and then refusing to print a correction/retraction when the San Francisco SPCA wrote demanding that you do so;
- Opposing maintaining the integrity of the 1998 Animal Shelter Law, legislation promoted in California which, among other things, increased holding periods, required shelters to work with rescue groups and added protections for feral cats and other sheltered animals;
- Opposing shelters working with rescue groups to place animals who would otherwise be killed;
- Promoting a statement on free roaming cats that is anti-cat and anti-feral;
- Not arguing for a public policy shift in favor of TNR when Wisconsin considered a plan to allow hunting of feral cats, but instead arguing that the cats should instead be killed by lethal injection in shelters; and,
- Endorsing the Asilomar Accords, which help to ensure the status quo of "catch and kill" around the country.

Indeed, in order to better understand what was driving the Asilomar Accords, I recently wrote to HSUS and asked the following questions:

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1. Does HSUS support TNR for feral cats as a humane alternative to shelter killing?
2. Does HSUS believe that healthy, feral cats should have a right to live and a right to their habitat?
3. Does HSUS support the right of an animal welfare protection group, rescue group or no kill shelter to take into their own custody any animal who will be killed in shelters (excluding dogs falling under the provisions of state vicious dog laws)?
4. Does HSUS support the repeal of certain animal control ordinances that may limit the availability of homes or be used against compassionate people, such as cat licensing, pet limit laws, those prohibiting the feeding of stray pets, and those mandating that cats not be allowed to roam outdoors?
5. Does HSUS support high-volume, low-cost spaying and neutering and have a commitment to use their own resources to provide such services?
6. Historically, traditional shelters have vilified No Kill shelters such as calling the no kill movement a “hoax,” calling their programs for feral cats “subsidized abandonment,” accusing offsite placement venues of leading to “impulse adoptions,” accusing them of reducing the “quality” of adoptive homes in exchange for “quantity,” and misrepresenting their successes. Does HSUS reject these assertions and call for an end to the belittling of the achievements of No Kill rescue groups and shelters?

Despite an alleged commitment in the Asilomar Accords to the open sharing of information, HSUS *refused* to respond.

In your published statement of ethical beliefs, you write that HSUS,

will honor the highest ethical standards in pursuing our mission, working within the system to advance our objectives. At the same time, we will strive to be nimble, hard-hitting, and aggressive, seizing opportunities as they arise and pushing ahead in a determined way with our proactive agenda. We exist to change the status quo and to change social norms. As such, confrontation and controversy are not to be feared; instead, they are logical consequences of meaningful and effective action.

Rather than embrace change, seizing life-saving opportunities as they arise, and working to change the status quo as it relates to mass killing in U.S. shelters, the Companion Animal Division has been content to maintain the status quo and regurgitate tired clichés about all cats belonging in homes, the problems caused by “nuisance” animals, how hard shelters work, the necessity of killing, the continued need to slaughter feral cats, and that the term “No Kill” is inflammatory and divisive. These attitudes are out of step with public sentiment, and viewpoints that we—as feral cat and No Kill advocates—utterly reject.

Having worked with and for a number of shelters, I can tell you firsthand that despite lamenting the need to kill large numbers of animals, the policies and practices of many shelters actually increase the numbers of animals killed. Many traditional shelters do not have a foster care program, or work with rescue groups. Still others limit volunteerism, do not take animals offsite

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for adoption, are not practicing TNR, and/or pursue draconian animal control ordinances such as those that prohibit the feeding of stray cats.

These shelters continue to ignore their own culpability in the slaughter, while professing to lament the continued killing as entirely the fault of the public's failure to spay/neuter or to make lifetime commitments to their animals. And in the face of No Kill successes around the country, their response has been to vilify or ignore these alternatives. Many of these policies and viewpoints are encouraged, endorsed, legitimized or influenced by HSUS.

It is time for new leadership and a new direction in the Companion Animal Division of HSUS. For far too many years, the viewpoints of this Division have done sheltered animals more harm than good. It is incumbent on you to no longer welcome within your ranks, those who are opposed to non-lethal feral cat programs that TNR represents, and non-lethal sheltering programs that No Kill embodies.

Mr. Pacelle, HSUS has a firm statement regarding its alleged commitment to non-violence. On your website, you state that "HSUS has never engaged in or supported any form of violence done in the name of protecting animals." But that is exactly what the Companion Animal Division is endorsing in U.S. animal shelters. In the face of non-lethal alternatives such as TNR for feral cats and the programs and services that define the No Kill paradigm, can there be any greater violence than the continued mass slaughter of dogs and cats whose only "crime" is that they have no human address?

With five million lives at stake annually, this is an ethical imperative that we can no longer ignore. It is enough that we have to fight against public irresponsibility. To also have to fight the irresponsible positions taken by the HSUS Companion Animal Division is a burden we can no longer accept or tolerate.

Very truly yours,

Nathan J. Winograd