

HSUS: *Not* Your Local Humane Society
By Bob Noonan

It's common knowledge among hunters and trappers that the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), based in Washington, D.C., is Enemy #1 to our way of life. The openly-stated goal of HSUS is to end all hunting and trapping, and they are behind almost all anti-hunting and trapping efforts across the country. (In reality, their aim is much wider; they also actively push a vegan agenda, and want to end *all* animal use, including farm raising of livestock for meat, dairy, and eggs.)

HSUS is effectively working towards these goals because it has huge financial resources – and the powerful prestige of its name.

Unfortunately, most people, even some trappers, do not understand what HSUS really is. That's because they call themselves the "Humane Society". What, exactly, is the Humane Society? It turns out there are two. And they're even not remotely the same.

The general public knows their local Humane Society as shelters for dogs and cats, run by dedicated, low paid people and volunteers who love animals. Across America there are thousands of such local shelters, almost all calling themselves the Humane Society. They are all independent; they are not connected to a larger organization, or even to each other. However, polling shows that 71% of Americans believe HSUS is an umbrella organization for all these local shelters. People think their shelters are somehow affiliated with HSUS. By extension, they also feel that HSUS is the voice of local shelters.

It is not.

HSUS has *nothing* to do with local Humane Society shelters; they just happen to use exactly the same name. HSUS furthers this deception by frequently using dogs and cats in their many ads that ask for money to help these animals in shelters. But HSUS does not run *any* pet shelters – and, although it raises well over \$100 million annually from contributions, it consistently gives shelters *less than 1%* of that money.

The figures below are based on HSUS's 2013 IRS Form 990, which all nonprofits have to file. In it, they themselves reveal their 2012 financial activity. (*Note: not all expenses listed.*)

- Total revenue: \$125.8 million.
- President/CEO Wayne Pacelle's annual compensation package: \$395,469.
- Employees: 636 (including 30 lawyers); 7 earn over \$200,000; 38 earn over \$100,000.
- Total salaries and benefits: \$44.5 million (35% of its total budget).
- Added to pension plan: \$2.4 million.
- Spent on fundraising: \$49 million (39% of its total budget).
- Spent on lobbying: \$2.5 million.
- **Grants to pet shelters: \$1,028,586 (.8% of its total budget).**
- Total expenses: \$120.3 million.
- Total investments: \$177.7 million (publicly traded securities).
- Total assets: \$195.4 million

Its varied investments are revealing. For example, although HSUS pushes legislation to end meat eating and farm raising of livestock, it has owned shares of Hardees, McDonald's, Wendy's, and other restaurants that focus on meat-based dishes. These are profitable

investments, and HSUS has never had a problem privately violating its own, publicly stated “values” for its main goal -- fundraising.

Of particular concern is HSUS’s 2012 investment of \$25.7 million in what they refer to as the “Central American and Caribbean” region. These investments are: Ascend Partners Fund I, L.P. (Cayman Islands); BKM Holdings Ltd. (Caymans); Fore Multi Strategy Offshore Fund, Ltd. (Caymans); Hayman Capital Offshore Partners, L.P. (Bermuda); Fir Tree International Value Fund (Caymans). These are all *for-profit hedge funds*. Why did a U.S. not-for-profit organization park almost \$26 million in offshore for-profit funds in the Caribbean area, long known as a place for corporations to hide money?

Equally disturbing is the May 2014 settlement of a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) lawsuit against HSUS by Feld Entertainment, Inc., which owns Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circuses. HSUS had sued Feld for mistreatment of their elephants, but it was discovered that they had paid their witness \$190,000 to provide false testimony. HSUS paid Feld a settlement of \$15.75 million to avoid the RICO charge, a conviction that would have seriously damaged their reputation and image.

The respected American Institute of Philanthropy (AIP), which analyzes charities, has consistently given HSUS annual “D” ratings, reflecting its high operational costs and low percentage of giving to its intended recipients. And in 2014, Charity Navigator, the nation’s largest charity evaluator, completely revoked HSUS’s charity rating, for these same reasons.

One major way HSUS raises money is by asking for contributions to help animals in shelters. Their deceptive advertising is so effective that polling of those who contributed to HSUS shows that 74% gave *specifically* to help pet shelters. A full 90% of those polled were completely unaware that HSUS gave less than 1% of its annual income to shelters. These people fully believed that by giving to HSUS, they were helping their local shelter.

Local humane shelters operate on a shoestring, with low salaries and unpaid volunteers. Maine’s Bangor Humane Society, for example, has only 20 paid employees, most part-time, and about 100 volunteers. Like most shelters, they survive on contributions and some municipal funding.

HSUS siphons off many millions of dollars that should go to these local Humane Society shelters, because much of the money given to HSUS is from people who think their contributions **are** going to shelters.

Money isn’t the only thing HSUS steals from the nation’s shelters. By using the name “Humane Society”, it also steals their well-deserved respect and prestige.

Another big fundraiser for HSUS is its constant anti-hunting and anti-trapping state ballot initiatives and referendums. During these, HSUS raises more than it spends, due to its deceptive appeals to their 11-plus million “constituents” across the country, mostly urban/suburban people

with no idea of the reality of either rural life or wildlife management, who don't even live in the states these initiatives affect. These ballot initiatives are moneymakers for HSUS. They make money even when they lose. But they do need wins, to encourage more contributions. That's another reason to beat them.

The term "Humane Society" has enormous positive clout in the public's mind. Hunters and trappers need to educate their friends and families about the difference between HSUS and local Humane Society shelters. Tell people if they want to contribute money to their local shelter, to send it directly to them, not to the fat cats at HSUS. If people are doubtful, tell them to call their shelter. Most shelters are well aware that HSUS siphons off millions meant for them, and will gladly tell callers that, if asked. In fact, some Humane Society shelters, when publically asking for contributions, will openly request that the money *not* be sent to HSUS.

HSUS is effective at attacking us as much because of its huge financial resources as because of its lies to a well-intentioned but uninformed urban public. By educating people, we can help divert money from them to the Humane Society shelters that desperately need it. And we need to make people aware that when HSUS says hunting and trapping are cruel, they are *not* speaking for the many Humane Societies throughout America that deserve our respect and admiration.

Hunters and trappers have achieved major goals in the past by focused grassroots action. We need to proactively educate people about HSUS. This article is on our Facebook page, at www.facebook.com/trapperspost - please feel free to Share it. If you want an electronic copy, email me asking for one and I'll send a return email with this article attached. Or copy this article from this site. Feel free to put it on your Facebook page, or send it to your local newspaper if you think they'd be interested, or print it out and give it to whoever you think might need it. As many people as possible need to know how HSUS gets their money, and what they actually do with it.

Bob Noonan

Email: editor@trapperspost.com