

American Humane Association

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Animal Fighting

So-called “sports” that involve pitting animals against animals or humans against animals continue to thrive in certain areas, whether legal or illegal. Dogfighting, cockfighting, bullfighting, bear wrestling, coon-on-a-log, coon-in-a-hole, hunts where animals are used to pursue, capture, or kill other animals, and other such events result in abuse, maiming, and painful death for thousands of animals each year. These cruel, barbaric events almost always end in the death or serious injury of an animal. Such organized and willful abuse of animals is contrary to the values of a humane, aware and caring society.

American Humane condemns and opposes all such blood sports and calls for an immediate end to legal acceptance of blood sports and for strong enforcement of laws that now exist banning these brutal activities. American Humane appreciates the efforts of elected officials to create stronger and more comprehensive laws providing for the enforcement of animal fighting prohibitions.

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Animals in Research

Since 1889, American Humane has worked to protect animals used in scientific research. While scientific progress has resulted from many animal experiments, American Humane looks forward to the time when such experiments become unnecessary or obsolete.

Until alternative research methods are available and applied, and as long as animals continue to be used in laboratories, American Humane will insist on the strictest accountability in research procedures and in the procurement, treatment, maintenance and disposition of all species of laboratory animals.

In any research project using animals, there should always be a written experimental protocol that is reviewed by a licensed veterinarian and that includes appropriate humane husbandry and medical care along with due consideration for elimination of pain and relief of stress and suffering of the animals. There should be a clear-cut expectation that the experiment will contribute significantly to knowledge that will ultimately benefit humans and animals and, in rare cases where pain, stress, or suffering cannot be completely avoided, the benefits must be clearly and objectively demonstrated to outweigh any pain, stress or suffering experienced by the animals, which must be kept to an absolute minimum level and for only the shortest period possible. With all cases, the fewest number of animals and the least traumatic approach possible must be used.

American Humane supports the development and application of alternative methods of research and testing to reduce the number of animals required, refine existing techniques and procedures to reduce or eliminate pain and stress in laboratory animals, and replace animals in research with *in vitro* methods where available. We advocate the enforcement of laws governing the use of animals in research and teaching, and advocate educating all individuals involved with research animals through courses in ethology,

ethics, manipulative procedures, anesthetics and laboratory animal care. American Humane insists that research results be broadly disseminated and shared so as to reduce the number of studies and, therefore, the number of animals used in research.

Until the use of animals in laboratories is entirely eliminated, American Humane will pay especially close attention to the ways in which laboratories obtain such animals. American Humane opposes the surrender of animals by animal shelters and animal control agencies to labs, pharmaceutical and educational institutions, or any scientific or research facility. All animals that are in the possession of a shelter or animal control agency should be returned to their rightful owners, placed in suitable homes or humanely euthanized.

A shelter or animal control agency that surrenders animals to research facilities promotes the fear that any animals taken in will end up in a laboratory or research facility, discouraging pet owners or those who find stray animals from bringing animals into the shelter or agency. In a situation in which there is a law mandating the release of animals from shelters for purposes of biomedical research, the local animal care or control agency and the humane community should work to repeal such a law.

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Captive Wild Animals

American Humane views wild animals as integral and valuable parts of the earth's environment. Wildlife worldwide deserves room to live normal, species-specific lives with protection from exploitation. American Humane recognizes that wildlife is likely to be kept in captivity for the foreseeable future. These captive animals must, at all times, be treated humanely and be provided the opportunity to live as naturally as possible. American Humane encourages all captive animal facilities to achieve and maintain national accreditation standards and to actively practice activities that ensure that each and every animal is treated humanely.

Wild animals, whether in captivity or in the wild, require space, food, shelter, air and water, as well as the company of other members of their species. American Humane recognizes that the promotion of wildlife health and well-being depends on ample exercise, variety in daily activity, freedom from abuse, and spacious, environmentally stimulating habitats within which to live.

American Humane supports humane and responsible wildlife research programs that seek to better our understanding of their behavior, nutritional requirements, reproduction and health. Programs that kill or endanger these animals for research purposes cannot be tolerated as acceptable science. American Humane believes that multiple criteria must be used to evaluate the well-being of captive wildlife.

American Humane opposes keeping deep-diving marine mammals and endangered wildlife in captivity, unless involved in formal captive breeding programs for the survival of the species or for humane reasons which directly benefit the individual animal involved.

In captivity, wildlife species must be provided with:

- Appropriate space requirements, including pool size and depth (if appropriate), as well as shaded resting and exercise areas appropriate for the size, stage of reproduction, age and species of the animal, to prevent muscle atrophy, stereotypical behavior, or other behavioral anomalies;
- Lighting, light spectrum, and natural light and dark cycles which approximate lighting conditions of their natural habitat;
- Regular water changes and species-specific water availability, and efficient ventilation which would prevent contamination of water and air;
- Regular feeding according to the biological requirements of each species, using unspoiled, properly stored food to prevent hunger and digestive problems;
- Regular monitoring of all animals to prevent undetected illnesses or injuries and to assure immediate veterinary treatment;
- Sensible handling and transporting of all captive wildlife in all stages of their life to avoid unnecessary suffering; and
- Regular relief from public display, and encouragement of species-appropriate interactions, to prevent anxiety and excitability.

Free-ranging wildlife should be guaranteed:

- Clean air;
- Clean water, including prevention and control of water pollution;
- Adequate food supply, including diversity and safety in the prey species available to them; and
- Room to explore and freedom from harassment, excessive noise, entanglement or human exploitation.

Captive wildlife should be guaranteed to be:

- FREE to live and grow in a humane environment, by providing conditions and care that limit stress;
- FREE to enjoy a healthy life, by preventing, diagnosing, and treating disease and injury;
- FREE to readily access fresh water, clean air and proper nutrition, by supplying a diet that maintains full health and vigor; and
- FREE to live in an appropriate and comfortable environment, including shelter and a resting area, by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animals' own kind and enabling the expression of normal behaviors.

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Cat Protection

An increase in the cat population has been accompanied by an increase in problems experienced by and with cats in our communities. American Humane's own studies show that, although dogs have typically outnumbered cats in shelters in the past, cats are less likely to be reclaimed or placed in new homes than dogs and are more likely to be euthanized.

In order to provide cats with the protection they deserve, American Humane advocates the passage of cat protection laws equal or similar to those currently in effect in most areas for the protection of dogs.

Such laws would include:

- Licensing programs designed to promote neutering;
- Proper identification required on cats at all times;
- Stray holding periods of seven days or more;
- A rabies vaccination requirement; and
- Holding owners responsible for proper control of their cats.

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Chemical Immobilization in Animal Control Work

The use of remote-delivered chemical compounds for restraint and capture of feral, fractious or elusive animals is employed by many animal control agencies. Improper usage of chemical immobilization equipment may result in injury, suffering or death of animals.

American Humane recommends the use of chemical immobilization only as a last resort.

If chemical immobilization is to be used:

- Officers must be properly trained and certified;
- The most modern, safe and effective equipment, procedures and drugs must be used; and
- Veterinary advice must be immediately available at all times during the procedure.

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Control of Nuisance Bird Populations

In some areas of the United States, including many urban areas, large concentrations of pigeons or migratory birds pose significant nuisance and possible health hazards to humans. In many cases, government agencies and individuals have attempted drastic bird population reduction programs through the use of poisons, causing unnecessary suffering for hundreds of thousands of birds.

American Humane opposes any bird control program which uses poison or compounds that cause unnecessary suffering, injury or death. Many population control methods are merely short-term solutions and do little except satisfy a political need for action.

American Humane encourages agencies responsible for bird nuisance complaints to use available, practical alternatives which assure both a humane and effective solution. Such programs include:

- Roost area modification;
- Population control through reproductive cycle interference;
- Reduction of human garbage or waste; and
- Appropriate planning in construction of new buildings.

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Dangerous Dog Laws and Breed-Specific Regulations

American Humane believes that no breed of dog automatically poses a high risk of attack, and that it is unjust to punish loving, responsible dog owners merely because of a breed's reputation. American Humane supports efforts to protect members of the community from dangerous animals and encourages communities to hold pet owners responsible for any injury caused by animals in their care. American Humane also encourages dog owners to undergo basic obedience training with their pets and to socialize them with people and other animals from an early age.

By definition, vicious or dangerous dogs are dogs that, without provocation, have attacked or behaved in a terrorizing manner and/or have been trained for or used for animal fighting. In order to protect the public from these types of animals, communities may legitimately enact "vicious or dangerous dog" laws. Such laws may impose reasonable restrictions on dogs proven to be vicious, such as housing requirements, fencing, leash length restrictions, muzzles, posted warning signs, sterilization, additional licensing, behavior training and liability insurance requirements. Any dog, whether previously labeled as vicious or not, that has attacked humans or domestic animals may be euthanized when local laws and jurisprudence are followed. The owner should be given a period of time and a process by which to appeal, and should be required to post a bond for the care of the animal during the appeal.

American Humane opposes legislation that seeks to ban a particular breed of dog. Such laws provide a false sense of security as all dogs, when improperly treated or trained, can present a risk to public health. Breed-specific legislation that outlaws specific breeds of dogs can increase the danger to the community by spawning black market interest, indiscriminant and irresponsible breeding practices, and subsequent

overpopulation issues. However, American Humane does not oppose regulations that impose specific restrictions (such as sterilization, differential licensing fees, insurance coverage, muzzling when in public and behavioral evaluation). Such regulations are acceptable because they can be fairly applied to animals regardless of breed and because legitimate public concern may necessitate regulatory action.

American Humane is also concerned by reports that a number of insurance companies have adopted policies that deny homeowner coverage to owners of particular breeds of dogs. Insurance companies concerned with the risk of dog-bite-related claims can seek information on the dog's behavioral history, require pets to undergo training, or determine whether a dog is a high insurance risk on a case-by-case basis. American Humane opposes any policy that denies insurance coverage to all owners of certain breeds of dogs.

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Euthanasia

American Humane considers euthanasia by injection (EBI) of sodium pentobarbital to be the only acceptable method for euthanasia of dogs and cats in animal shelters.

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Events and Contests Involving Animals

American Humane is concerned that a variety of locally sponsored community events or contests, organized for profit or entertainment, involve the abuse of animals. Often these events include animal fighting, chasing or racing, and such events run contrary to American Humane's central belief that animals should not be harmed or endangered for the sake of human entertainment.

Often, animals used for entertainment in such events are directly abused by being excessively used, injured, chased, beaten, grabbed at, squeezed, kicked or killed for the sake of the event. Also, breeding animals for such purposes contributes to unwanted overpopulation problems. In addition, the potential for neglect is great in the areas of transportation and care of the animals before and after the event.

Sadly, these events can have a desensitizing effect on children, making them unsympathetic to the suffering of other life forms and allowing them to believe that animal abuse is acceptable. In no case are these events vital to the community. Entertainment or fund-raising events that do not involve animals can be as well or better enjoyed by participants and spectators.

American Humane opposes all such events or contests that feature or involve the abuse of animals of any breed or species, including live lures, and any legislation that would legalize such practices. When animals are involved in entertainment, they must be treated humanely at all times and they must be transported in a humane and safe manner that includes security from injury, sufficient space, frequent stops for natural exercise and rest, and appropriate provision of water, environmental temperature, air quality, and food, plus attention to cleanliness and hygiene needs.

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Farm Animal Welfare

Farm animal welfare is an issue of growing moral and social significance. For American Humane, protection of farm animals has always been a topic of deep concern, with efforts dating back to the organization's beginnings in 1877.

Animal production methods are often evaluated on economic grounds only. But productivity, by itself, is not always a reliable indicator of the well-being of an animal.

American Humane takes as a guiding principle that every animal subjected to full, direct human control should have an opportunity to experience an environment for which its own species is predisposed in order to develop into a physically and psychologically healthy being. All farm animals must have access to adequate air and water and to a food supply that matches their biological requirements, housing that is sufficiently safe and spacious, appropriate levels of environmental complexity, regular supervision and health care, and sensible handling in all stages of life, including during slaughter.

The establishment of American Humane's Free Farmed™ program is an outgrowth of American Humane's commitment to the well-being of farm animals. Free Farmed certification recognizes the commitment of food producers to follow animal welfare standards of practice which ensure that farm animals are:

- FREE to live and grow in a humane environment under conditions and care that limit stress;
- FREE to enjoy a healthy life, benefiting from disease and injury prevention and rapid diagnoses and treatment;
- FREE to readily access fresh water and a diet that maintains full health and vigor; and

- FREE to express normal behaviors and live in an appropriate and comfortable environment that includes sufficient space, proper facilities, shelter, a resting area and company of the animals' own kind.

American Humane also believes that an important criterion of the moral acceptability of a given animal production method is its impact on the ecology, and opposes large-scale agricultural operations that do not achieve sustainable environmental integration.

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Feral Cats

American Humane has a history of concern for the humane treatment and responsible ownership of cats. Recognizing that the population of unwanted cats is large, American Humane strongly supports policies and programs that work to reduce the overpopulation and abandonment of cats in a humane manner. In some cases, the most humane solution is euthanasia. American Humane opposes any methods that are inhumane, including poisoning and traps that inflict injury.

American Humane also recognizes the concern for pursuing non-lethal alternatives for cats that are not suitable candidates for adoption, and therefore acknowledges that interim programs may be needed to provide these cats with sterilization, disease prevention, safety and sanctuary. American Humane does not condone the placement of socialized cats (e.g., those that can be handled and relate to humans) in feral cat type colonies because life on the street is not acceptable when life in a loving home is a possibility, and socialized cats and kittens should be removed from feral cat colonies. The goal of any cat management program should be the eventual elimination of feral cat colonies, and American Humane strongly supports trap, neuter, and release programs.

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Hunting and Trapping

American Humane strongly opposes any animal hunt in which the target animal is confined or tame, in which the hunter fires on an animal with a remotely controlled weapon, or which uses animal traps that cause indiscriminate and unnecessary suffering. These practices involve no sport or skill, are denounced by true hunters and outdoorsmen, and result in painful deaths to thousands of unsuspecting animals, many of whom have been tamed and are unafraid of humans. Any practices that result in slow or painful deaths or suffering are considered by American Humane to be inhumane and, therefore, unacceptable hunting activities.

Canned hunts involve the release of animals into small, confined areas where they can be shot by paying hunters. This practice involves no sport and no skill on the part of the hunter. The animals victimized by canned hunting have no chance of escape and are often very tame. The customers of canned hunts pay a fee in order to slaughter docile creatures in a fenced-in area. Most true hunters scorn canned animal shootings as unfair and unsporting. Furthermore, canned hunts involve exotic animals that can present ecological and disease risks.

Internet hunting allows “hunters” to track and shoot animals remotely, by way of a camera and rifle controlled by computer. At least one ranch in Texas is already conducting such remote hunts, and others may follow if laws prohibiting this practice are not enacted soon.

Steel-jaw leghold traps utilize steel bands with sharp teeth that snap onto the limb of any animal that walks across them. Animals caught in such traps are generally not killed immediately; most either die of starvation or are killed by the hunter upon return to the trap. These traps are especially cruel because animals have been known to chew off their own paws and legs in order to escape. Moreover, steel-jaw leghold traps cannot differentiate between which types

of animals they catch. The animals that are caught may be unwanted by the trapper, may be protected by hunting or endangered species laws, or may be a family pet.

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Permanent Pet Identification

American Humane believes that all pets should have identification. Tags still serve useful purposes in identifying animals and their owners as well as for licensing and rabies vaccination certification. In addition to the use of tags, permanent identification of all pets, using such methods as microchipping, is highly recommended by American Humane as a method that offers the best long-term solution to pet identification and the efforts of shelters to reunite pets with their human families. This is especially true for emergency and disaster situations when separation of pets from their owners has been proven to be a serious problem that often results in failure to find pet owners.

Furthermore, American Humane supports public education on the importance and methods of permanent pet identification.

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Pet Overpopulation

Every year, millions of cats and dogs are euthanized in our nation's animal shelters because there are more companion animals than there are responsible homes for them. Preventing the proliferation of these unwanted pets would dramatically decrease their numbers and the resulting unavoidable deaths. American Humane believes that no dog or cat adopted from a shelter should be allowed to reproduce. Furthermore, given the current prevalence of breeding operations and the already-existing overpopulation of dogs and cats, failure to spay or neuter one's own animal is reckless and irresponsible. Only pet owners with a responsible desire to breed their animals and the means to place each and every animal in a loving home should keep unsterilized pets.

Law: In order to effectively deal with the rampant pet overpopulation problem, American Humane believes that all dogs and cats adopted from public or private animal care and control agencies should be spayed or neutered. Therefore, American Humane supports the passage of state laws mandating that all dogs and cats adopted from public or private animal care and control agencies be sterilized.

Prepubescent Neutering of Sheltered Kittens and Puppies: The research on the physical, behavioral, and short- and long-term effects of prepubescent neutering in dogs and cats shows no adverse results. American Humane supports the practice of prepubescent spaying and neutering as a feasible solution to decreasing pet overpopulation and the tragedy of resulting deaths.

Spay/Neuter Clinics: To ensure that all adopted animals are unable to reproduce, surgery would have to be performed prior to adoption. Unfortunately, not all shelters have the capability to neuter animals, and some that possess these resources may not neuter animals before puberty due to concerns of biological and psychological effects or traditional beliefs.

The promotion and subsidization of spay and neuter operations through low-cost spay/neuter clinics has proven to be an effective and helpful way to counter these issues. The reduction in cost serves to motivate both those who cannot and those who will not pay the non-subsidized price for the operations.

American Humane believes that the protection of millions of pet animals from the cruelty of being unwanted is a mandate that supersedes owner reluctance or inability to cooperate in that protection. As a result, American Humane supports the establishment and operation of low-cost or no-cost spay/neuter clinics. American Humane also advocates for the use of emerging non-surgical alternatives proved to be safe for the sterilization of cats and dogs.

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Puppy Mills and Mass Breeding

The mass breeding of dogs for the commercial pet market has resulted in numerous large-scale breeding operations known as “puppy mills.” In the course of these for-profit breeding operations, animals suffer abuse and physical stress, exposure to extremes of heat and cold, and lack of sufficient food and water. They live in filthy conditions that foster disease, and frequently suffer from the absence of veterinary care. Adults are bred excessively and often spend their entire lives in small runs or cages.

For the puppies, neglect of emotional needs due to lack of socialization, isolation and the trauma of transportation at an early age is a serious problem. In addition, ignorance or indifference to good breeding practices often results in dogs with genetic problems such as bad temperaments, hip dysplasia, hernias, heart murmurs, eye defects, hemophilia and others.

American Humane opposes the mass breeding of puppies for profit because of the suffering and exploitation of the dogs involved and because of the unnecessary addition of hundreds of thousands of animals to an already tragic overpopulation of pets. American Humane seeks to eliminate mass breeding establishments through enforcement of current laws and regulations, enactment of legislation, and public education to eliminate the market for such animals, and applauds elected officials who have made this issue a priority.

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Transportation of Animals

Animals of all breeds and species must be transported in a humane and safe manner that includes safety and security from injury, sufficient space, frequent stops for natural exercise and rest, and appropriate provision of water, environmental temperature, air quality and food, plus attention to cleanliness and hygiene needs. Any deviation from sound and humane transportation practices is opposed by American Humane.

Transportation in Open Vehicles: The transportation of pets in open vehicles is dangerous for both the animals and the public. While riding in the open vehicle, pets are exposed to wind and weather extremes, and are also at risk of injury or death from jumping or falling from a moving vehicle. Animals that jump or fall from truck beds in traffic create a hazard for drivers who must rapidly brake or swerve to avoid collision with them. American Humane opposes transportation of all animals in open vehicles and calls for the passage of local and state laws prohibiting this method of transportation.

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Wild and Exotic Animals as Pets

Distinction: Wild animals are those not specifically bred over many generations to adapt to human confinement, company or control. Exotic animals are wild animals not native to North America.

When wild or exotic animals are kept as pets, the result is usually tragic for the animal and often negative for the owner. Lack of knowledge about behavioral traits, social needs and proper nutrition lead to inadvertent abuse. For many of the larger wild or exotic species, the cost of feed, veterinary care, and handling equipment and confinement facilities may be prohibitive for most owners and leads to negligence and suffering or death of the animal when they are not adequately provided.

Furthermore, individuals exposed to captive wild or exotic animals may suffer disease, injury or death. This occurs when owners become overconfident with wild animals, either assuming they will remain as affectionate as adults as they were when young or believing they have tamed and trained the animals well enough to defuse their dangerous instincts. When a person is attacked, the animal is usually destroyed. In addition, when appropriate precautions are not taken, some species are potential transmitters of diseases to humans.

American Humane opposes the deliberate capture and confinement or the breeding or hybrid breeding of wild or exotic animals as pets

Wild and Exotic Animals Already Maintained as Pets: American Humane realizes that many wild and exotic animals are already being kept as pets. While the practice is not condoned, such animals must be treated humanely by being provided the freedoms listed previously under “Captive Wild Animals.”

American Humane believes that this practice of keeping wildlife as pets must cease and that appropriate professional organizations be given the responsibility for the care of such animals that are usually unsuitable for release as a result of being kept as pets. In addition, American Humane supports education programs that teach children and adults about the issues associated with the practice of keeping wildlife as pets.

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Wild Horses and Burros

In 1971, Congress enacted the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to protect these animals that are viewed by many as the last symbols of the American West. In spite of the law, tens of thousands of wild horses and burros have been removed from public lands.

American Humane believes in the full implementation of federal law and:

- Calls for regulations, guidelines and scientific formulas to determine forage allocations for the multiple use of the public lands;
- Supports rational management of public lands which respects the value of wild horses and the interests of all citizens;
- Encourages the establishment of a clear formula to justify the numbers of horses and livestock permitted on the public lands; and
- Opposes attempts to weaken the Wild Horse and Burro Act.

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