



Taking a Stand

The HSUS talks with Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) about his efforts to support animals in need.



The HSUS: You have been a leader in seeking funding to enforce animal protection laws, such as the Animal Welfare Act and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. Why is this so important?

Rick Santorum: Federal funding for enforcement of animal welfare laws is critical because, without enforcement, they are ineffective at best. I have circulated several letters to my Senate colleagues to generate support for increased funding for important USDA enforcement agencies. By working with the appropriate committee chairmen and administration officials, we have successfully increased funding levels. As a direct result, more commercial animal facilities have been inspected and compliance has increased.

The HSUS: On what other animal issues have you recently focused?

RS: As you know, dogfighting and cockfighting are barbaric, despicable activities in which animals are drugged to heighten their aggression and forced to keep fighting even after suffering grievous injuries. Animal fighting is almost always associated with illegal gambling and often involves illegal drug trafficking and violence. Cockfighting also has been linked to a recent outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease that destroyed many poultry flocks and cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Accordingly, I recently cosponsored S. 382, the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act of 2005, which would make it illegal to sponsor or exhibit animal fighting competitions.

The HSUS: Pennsylvania has a large number of commercial dog breeding operations—facilities often called “puppy mills.” Does their presence in your state make it more politically challenging to take on this issue?

RS: Because so many commercial dog breeding operations exist in Pennsylvania, it is especially pertinent for me to get involved. Most breeders exercise appropriate care and judgment in their

breeding practices; however, it is important that we crack down on facilities that do not meet the most basic of needs required by law. We must enforce the existing standards for the health and well-being of these animals.

In an effort to increase the tools necessary to do this, I introduced the Puppy Protection Act in October 2001, which was passed by the Senate but stricken from the final 2002 farm bill. However, I am planning to introduce a bill in the near future that will subject those who sell a high volume of puppies to the public to USDA regulations under the Animal Welfare Act.

The HSUS: Do you think any progress can be made to improve conditions for farm animals raised in intensive confinement operations and slaughter practices?

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Nutrition, Research and General Legislation with jurisdiction over animal welfare issues, I am interested in all animal welfare issues. I am pleased to see that the agriculture industry is making an effort to improve the well-being of farm animals. The realization that an animal cared for properly will be less likely to become sick, which will result in a better product, is encouraging the animal industry to address these issues.

The HSUS: What can HSUS members do to prompt lawmakers to take more progressive stances on animal welfare issues?

RS: Participation is key to the democratic process. I encourage all HSUS members to write their senators and representatives about the realities of animal welfare issues. Members of Congress must be educated about what abuses are occurring so they can fully understand and support their constituents' concerns. ★



For more information on animal-friendly legislation, visit www.hsus.org/legislation_laws or write to **Government Affairs**, The HSUS, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.