

Editorial: HSUS & DDAL Merger

The merger was announced on September 1, 2006, expanding again the size, strength and expertise of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) – already a giant in the animal rights world worth close to \$120 million.

The HSUS press release states the merger “will result in increased public policy activity and coordination on animal welfare issues and further streamline operations among national animal advocacy groups.” Sara Amundson, DDAL legislative director, is slated to be executive director of the Humane Society Legislative Fund.

HSUS and DDAL have worked together in the past on several issues such as ending greyhound racing, opposing use of animals in testing, and on laws to regulate breeding and sales of dogs and cats.

Surprisingly, some people still believe that HSUS helps animals by operating and/or supporting animal shelters when in reality that is not the case. According to HSUS 2004 financials, 20.6% of their direct donation income of \$78.5 million is spent on management and fundraising. The largest expenditure, 65.6% or \$51.5 million is in a broad category labeled program services. Program services encompasses public education and publications, wildlife sheltering, regional office cruelty investigations, and litigation. Under program services expenses include salaries accounting for \$9 million and benefits, taxes \$2.4 million.

Working through the 45-page statement, finally is a narrative on the activities comprising program services. Public education funds of \$34.5 million are spent on their media department, magazine, and the animal channel, while twenty-eight thousand dollars is spent in direct grants. Interestingly, the statement gives credit to HSUS for rescue/rehabilitation of the collies in a tractor trailer crossing the US/Canadian border that were taken into custody by officials in Montana. Most who followed that tragic story will remember it as the Montana Collies or by the name Camp Collie where the dogs were housed during treatment and the long trial process.

The goals of HSUS are definable by reading their position statements which can be accessed from their website:

http://www.hsus.org/about_us/policy_statements/statement_on_companion.html

- [The HSUS] supports the enactment and enforcement of animal control ordinances designed to regulate, deter, and reduce companion animal breeding,
- The HSUS opposes the sale of dogs, cats, and other animals through pet stores and other commercial operations
- The HSUS opposes rodeos as they are commonly organized
- The HSUS opposes the use of captive wild animals as performers in circuses, film and television, and commercials
- The HSUS opposes the hunting of any living creature for fun, trophy, or sport because of the animal trauma, suffering, and death that result.

- The HSUS promotes eating with conscience and embracing the Three Rs—reducing the consumption of meat and other animal-based foods; refining the diet by eating products only from animals who have been raised, transported, and slaughtered in a system of humane, sustainable agriculture that does not abuse the animals; and replacing meat and other animal-based foods in the diet with plant-based foods.

The press release on the merger quotes HSUS CEO Wayne Pacelle as saying, “Our members often wonder why groups and individuals with a common purpose do not join together, and we are heeding their call to do just that.”

Although DDAL is small in comparison (2005 Form 990 lists \$3.5 million income), the merger adds a well known face, experienced staff, and legislative connections for the use of HSUS management.

How similar are the goals and views of HSUS and DDAL?

HSUS and DDAL worked jointly on federal legislation to regulate dog and cat breeding by lobbying for Senator Rick Santorum’s Puppy Protection (PPA) Act in 2001. The PPA had 3 main points: mandating how often breeding could be done; writing engineering standards for veterinary care, housing facilities, socialization, and training; and a license revocation clause. This extreme legislation failed twice in the Senate.

Not to be deterred, the bill was re-introduced in 2005 as the Pet Animal Welfare Statue (aka PAWS) labeled the Puppy Mill bill to gain sympathy support. This radical and controversial legislation succeeded only in dividing the dog world in heated arguments, and eventually dividing support even among the sponsors when the idea of having USDA outsource the inspection process was publicized.

DDAL’s aim through the initial anti-breeder legislation was to mandate licensing for every person in the US that even bred a single litter of dogs and cats. Their passion is so intense to regulate (thereby diminishing or eliminating breeding) that they filed suit against USDA (DDAL vs Venemen, Anne) claiming the intent of the Animal Welfare Act was to regulate retail sellers as well as commercial dealers. USDA prevailed in this litigation.

DDAL’s mission statements can be obtained from their website. The first is the development of national, state and local legislation that will minimize the inhumane treatment of animals.

Also stated as a DDAL mission is to network with other animal protection groups to promote common goals. The PPA and PAWS are examples of this networking, as is working against use of animals in medical research and against use of animals for entertainment.

DDAL is a joint sponsor with HSUS, the Animal Protection Institute, and others for this month’s Taking Action for Animals Conference. Keynote presenter at the conference is

controversial ethicist, Peter Singer, founder of The Great Ape Project, who is well known for his statements and beliefs on animal equality.

*“Surely there will be some nonhuman animals whose lives, by any standards, are more valuable than the lives of some humans.” -- Peter Singer, godfather of the animal rights movement, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals*, 2nd edition, 1990.*

Another example of networking with animal rights/protection groups is DDAL's partnering with the Chimp Collaboratory, founded in 2000 with a grant from the Glaser Foundation. Quoting from the Chimp Collaboratory website, Glaser Foundation Director Martin Collier states, “The chimpanzee is an especially compelling yet imperiled species. Because of our genetic similarity and unique relationship to chimpanzees, they can lead the way in breaking down barriers that separate us from them, human from non-human animals.”

To distance themselves in the public eye from violent extremists in the animal rights movement such as the Animal Liberation Front, organizations like HSUS and DDAL prefer to call their work and beliefs “animal protection”. Unlike animal welfare, animal protection in this sense continues to inject philosophical and moral values for animals into the legal arena and mainstream media.

What does all this mean for breeders, animal owners, and the public? With the massive funding behind these groups, teams of attorneys, campaign contributions to sympathetic legislators, the ability to entrench their animal rights ideology in universities across America and enormous outpouring of propaganda to the public through the media, it is imperative that owners, breeders, legislators and the general public learn to thoroughly examine and understand animal related legislation proposed at all levels of government.

Is the legislation based on facts and needs for your area, is it funded, can it be enforced, can community education accomplish the needed end result instead? Is the legislation based on sound principles or is it emotionally driven? Will the legislation open doors to diminish your ability to make decisions regarding the care and treatment of your animals? How will the legislation affect your ability to obtain pets in the future?

Do your homework and understand the agendas. The animal rights movement is basically an animal non-use philosophy; it is about control not animal welfare. Supporting legislation based on emotion and philosophical interpretation may bring unwanted consequences.

“We have no problem with the extinction of domestic animals. They are creations of human selective breeding.” Wayne Pacelle, (current CEO Humane Society of the US), *Animal People*, May, 1993