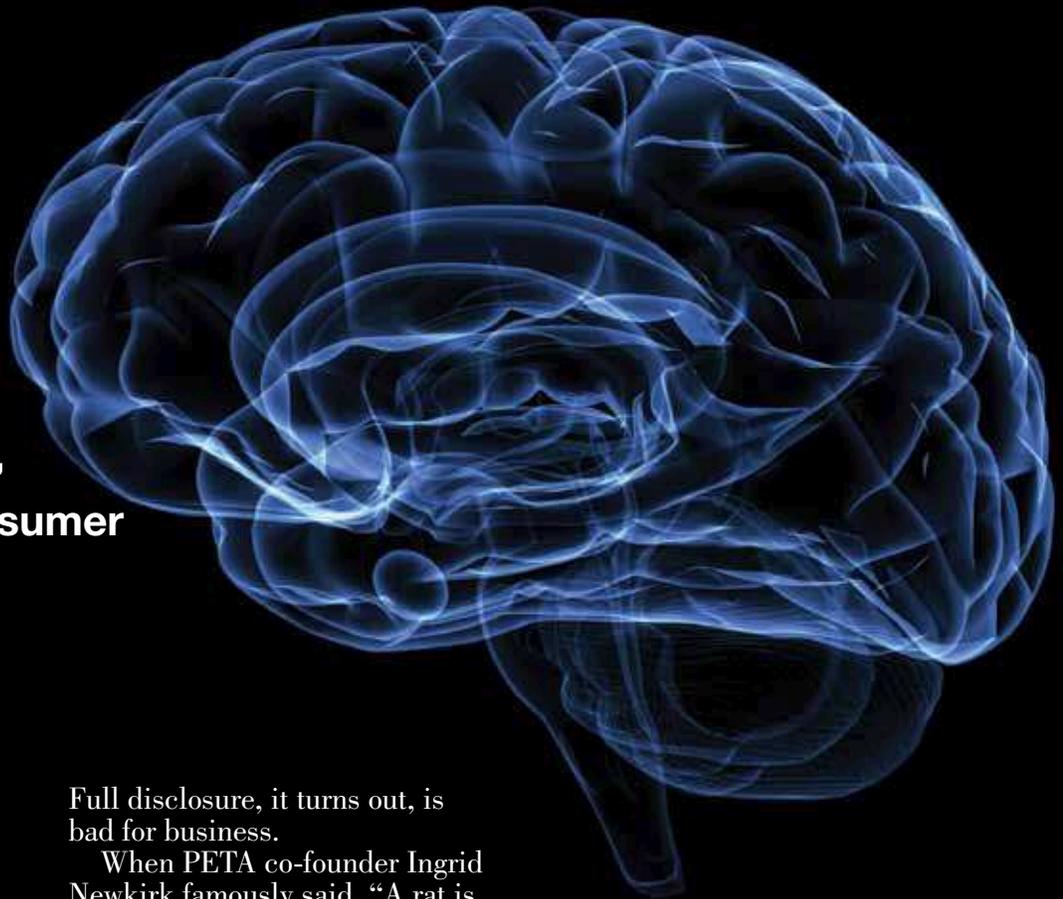


Inside the HSUS Brain

You can avoid becoming a Humane Society of the United States statistic. Here's what you need to know.

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Freedom



Like many social movements, the world of animal rights is difficult to understand from the outside. And like most animal rights groups, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) would rather you stay in the dark.

Full disclosure, it turns out, is bad for business.

When PETA co-founder Ingrid Newkirk famously said, “A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy,” she wasn’t making chit-chat. She was describing a moral philosophy—she and millions of people living in America believe a heifer has the same moral value as your child.

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The animal rights religion

“Animal rights” is a belief system with sacraments and high priests like Newkirk and HSUS CEO Wayne Pacelle, and acolytes in HSUS up-and-comer Paul Shapiro and Mercy For Animals founder, Nathan Runkle, among many others. It has its Bible (Animal Liberation) and its catechism (unofficially, PETA’s website). It also has its own very rigid Articles of Faith. Here are the three most basic ones:

1. There is no higher calling in human life than the elimination of suffering.
It naturally follows from this that vegans are more virtuous than the rest of us.
2. Animals and humans have the same exact moral value.

Therefore, any tactic you would use to save a person’s life, whether legal or illegal, is justifiable if you’re trying to save an animal’s life.

3. Using animals for any human purpose always causes animals to suffer.

So ending the suffering of animals requires that we use fewer of them for food (and eventually none), effectively eliminating suffering by eliminating the sufferer.

Read it again. You’re looking inside the brains of both Pacelle and Newkirk. The two are wired identically, even if they promote their joint cause differently.

Rule #2 gives animal activists the moral authority to lobby for changes in the law. It also gives those who are so inclined the philosophical “cover” to commit arson, make vicious threats, and call openly for the murder.

And that bit about “eliminating the sufferer” is the linchpin of what HSUS is planning for the coming decades. Find another explanation for HSUS Outreach Director Josh Balk’s startling ice-breaker during a 2009 speech: **“It is needed for farm animals that we get people to eat more vegetarian meals... We just have to reduce the number of animals that are raised for food.”**

What cows “need”

Josh Balk wasn’t recommending vegetarianism for health reasons, or to save the planet. That would be too “anthropocentric.” He’s doing it because he thinks that’s what the animals need. And if you believe the animal rights dogma that suffering is unavoidable on farms and feedlots, not being born starts to look pretty good.

This line of thought is what drives the leadership of organizations like HSUS:

Figure out what animals need, raise money to give it to them, steamroll inconvenient people who get in the way, and remake the world in Peter Singer’s image.

Lather, rinse, repeat.

The problem is that it’s impossible to ask heifers what they need. Actual animal behaviorists make educated guesses, of course. And centuries of trial and error have given us some insights into what they *don’t* need. But divining the wants of livestock is ultimately a psychological game, like five-year-old children assigning motives and emotions to their imaginary friends. Over time, the “needs” of those friends get more outlandish. At first “my imaginary friend” needs a lollipop. Then it’s a pair of shoes. But when it’s a room and weekly allowance, the game disintegrates. This game of quiet incrementalism is standard stuff for animal rights strategists.

For cows with supposed “desires,” a quick trip to unconsciousness followed by humane slaughter may be the best deal imaginable. It sure beats nonexistence, anyway. But do all cows need unfettered access to pasture, and a diet that’s free of corn? Does every heifer need to wean her young for six months?

Do chickens need to congregate outdoors, at the risk of succumbing to the elements (and to their cannibalistic kin)? Do sows need the freedom to be unrestrained, even if their own health suffers? Do all livestock need to avoid the veterinarian’s antibiotic needle, even if it makes them vastly more likely to become ill?

Fast-forwarding a bit, do farm animals need legal personhood, and the right to sue you in court? Do they need assurances that they will not be eaten in the first place?

Except what animals actually need, it turns out, doesn’t matter as much as determining *who gets to decide* what they need. And who’s more likely to know the right answer: Meat-eaters or vegans? Active ranchers or passive philosophers? A Wyoming native, or someone from Connecticut (like Wayne Pacelle) who has never had a job in agriculture, works in Washington, DC, and admits that “there’s no special bond between me and other animals”?

Put another way, should real-world stakeholders decide what animals need? Or should it be outsiders—self-styled experts who don’t work with animals and would never think of eating them?

Believe it or not, the outsiders are winning.

Meet the outsiders

For the first 50 years of its existence, the HSUS was a moderate, milquetoast animal protection group. It was started in 1954 by

“Wayne Pacelle, Paul Shapiro, and many other HSUS senior staffers claim repeatedly, almost pathologically, that they represent 11 million Americans—one out of 28 people in the United States. That’s more than 25,000 members in every Congressional district. The problem with this is that it’s not true. Not even close.”

dissident employees of the American Humane Association who wanted something a bit more radical.

By 1950s standards, they got it. Originally called the National Humane Society, HSUS was more effective than AHA, whose advocacy mission was (and still is) split between protecting animals and children. HSUS was more aggressive. It lobbied governments. It got press. It organized marches. It pioneered the concept of cause-based celebrity spokespersons.

But underneath, HSUS remained a lumbering mammoth with a slow-moving internal bureaucracy. Its dues-paying members were more commonly elderly ladies than young swashbucklers. The organization’s leaders made gobs of money and got the kinds of perks normally reserved for ethically compromised politicians.

HSUS, in short, was animal rights “corporatized.” It still is, but a new generation of leadership stormed into the executive suite in late 2003 and promptly took the training wheels off.

Wayne Pacelle is the first vegan to lead HSUS and he hires mostly vegans for his inner circle. If you’re unfamiliar with the term, vegans are vegetarians with a superiority complex. They don’t touch meat, dairy, eggs, seafood, animal-tested household products, leather, fur, wool, or silk (have you seen how they boil the worms?). “Natural lambskin” condoms are forbidden. So is honey.

Pacelle was asked during a 2007 Farm Bill hearing to identify the most humanely raised pork or veal in the world—any product that actually met his standards of how

2,000,000 members.” His own number—1.2 million—departs from his P.R. spin by a factor of nine.

And HSUS’s 2009 tax return disclosed that the group only prints 450,000 copies of its bimonthly “member magazine,” *AllAnimals*. According to the HSUS website, every member who contributes \$25 or more gets the magazine. And *AllAnimals* is the only place HSUS members can get their ballots to vote for board of directors candidates.

Any organization with 450,000 active members is a force to be reckoned with, to be sure. But that’s a far cry from 11 million.

Those two numbers are more than 2,400 percent apart.

Lobbying your Congressman with the weight of 25,000 members in his district puts your influence on a par with most labor unions. Having just 1,000 constituents on your membership rolls puts you in a class with the ladies’ garden club, the Church of Scientology, and the Green Party.

Not that HSUS’s lobbying efforts are legitimate to begin with. When the organization was founded in 1954, its Articles of Incorporation included this nugget: “No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall

consist of the carrying on of propoganda [sic] or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.”

Fifty-six years ago, HSUS’s founders took that maxim seriously. Today, though, the organization’s mission has crept so far afield that propagandizing and lobbying are Job One and Job Two.

Why? Refer back to Rules 1, 2, and 3.

Where you stand

The animal rights movement in general (and HSUS specifically) is more interested in monkey-wrenching the livestock industry than any other sector of the economy. And the reason comes down to simple numbers.

As a nation, our circus elephants and captive marine mammals are measured in dozens, research chimps in hundreds, zoo animals in thousands. Pets and lab rats are measured in millions. But taken together, cows, pigs, and chickens are counted in billions. From HSUS’s point of view, then, there are more collective lives for them to “save.”

Where HSUS is headed

Much has been written about Proposition 2 in California, the rise of “the Ohio model” of Livestock Care Standards Boards, and HSUS’s state-by-state march on eggs, pork, and veal. But those who focus laser-like on guessing which state will be next on HSUS’s hit list are missing the forest for the trees.

The smart money is on HSUS pursuing a *federal* legislative strategy, leveraging the state battles as a mere prelude. It’s critical that everyone involved in producing animal protein allow themselves to imagine what is probably coming.

HSUS has been working overtime in recent years to cultivate relationships with Congressmen and Senators on both sides of the political aisle, and they’re counting on those allies to introduce a re-written Humane Slaughter Act in the near future. That legislation will certainly include a nationwide ban on hog gestation stalls and veal crates; prohibitions on cages for egg-laying hens will mark the first time poultry is included in the law.

And even if beef cattle are a numerical afterthought to animal rights leaders, afterthoughts in the fortieth paragraph of a bill can hurt just as much as measures on page one.

A ban on subclinical antibiotics will make their wish list. So will new prohibitions



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on the interstate transport of cattle to slaughter. They might even throw in new restrictions on feedlot water use...and much more. The Humane Slaughter Act is 52 years old, and it hasn't been significantly amended in 38 years. HSUS understands that it will only get one bite at the apple, so its well-heeled lobbyists will make it count.

And here's where all the state-level maneuvering on hogs and poultry will come back to haunt you: In every state where HSUS has put its agenda into law (whether through legislation or at the ballot box), it has created a class of *federal* legislators who can be given political cover to vote for a nationwide adoption of these new laws.

Recalcitrant Republican Congressmen, for instance, can be persuaded to vote for a national law forbidding what their constituents have already banned back home. And HSUS will make the case to both Republicans and Democrats from urban districts (and to U.S. Senators from states without major animal ag interests) that making every state comply with what a few have already decided is a great way to level the commercial and agricultural playing fields.

Make no mistake: This strategy is already in place, and the finish line is in sight. The logical holdouts are federal legislators from the five top-10 beef states but they are not on the top-10 list for either pork or poultry production. But if you think the combined Congressional delegations from Texas, South Dakota, Kansas, Montana, and Tennessee can stop a bill in its tracks, think again.

And all those Livestock Care Standards Boards? A federal law can make them moot faster than you can say "Ohio Farm Bureau."

What you can do

Like it or not, HSUS has more credibility with the American public than you do. A 2010 poll from Opinion Research Corporation (CNN's political pollsters) found that 83 percent of Americans had a "very" or "somewhat" positive impression of the group.

No matter what you do, you will never poll at 83 percent. That's what opinion research professionals call "Mother Teresa territory." HSUS's leaders reached this rarefied air by feeding a pernicious lie about who they are and what they do.

You shouldn't sink to their level, but you do need to draw even with animal rights activists in the public opinion category,

however—unless you want them to win the legislative, regulatory, and litigation battles that inevitably develop. So it's important for cattlemen, beef processors and everyone else in the industry to work to improve their own image.

But that's only half the battle, just as a football team's defensive unit is only half of a team. At the same time you're learning to tell a better story about what you do, you also have to be willing to tell the truth about your attackers.

Why? Because defense alone will not win championships. You can't reach the playoffs without a solid offense and animal agriculture has never had one.

The playbook for your (as yet nonexistent) offensive side is being written as you read this. You can find a lot of what is undeniably true in the document library at www.HumaneWatch.org:

- HSUS shares less than one percent of its fundraising haul with real humane societies and other hands-on pet shelters;
- HSUS is not affiliated with any pet shelters;
- HSUS does not operate any pet shelters;
- National polling shows that 71 percent of Americans (incorrectly) believe HSUS is "an umbrella group that represents thousands of local humane societies," and 59 percent (incorrectly) think HSUS "contributes most of its money to local organizations that care for dogs and cats.";
- According to HSUS's own tax return, the group spent \$3,999 for every animal it rescued in 2009;
- The animal rights movement's own internal watchdog publication (*Animal People News*) says HSUS spends 50 percent of its money on overhead expenses;
- Charity Navigator gives HSUS one star (out of four) for organizational efficiency;
- The American Institute of Philanthropy gives HSUS a "D" rating overall;
- One of HSUS's senior staffers is a former national spokesman for the terrorist Animal Liberation Front; and
- HSUS's senior staffer in charge of manipulating food companies into submission with shareholder resolutions had the same job with PETA until last year.

With *bona fides* like that, HSUS's continued success in fundraising and propagandizing is nothing short of Orwellian. But without good execution, the best offensive playbook is just a nice collection of ideas.

When we launched the HumaneWatch blog in February 2010, we only knew about half of these things. Now, the million-plus website visitors—and over 200,000 Facebook fans—are conversant in all of this information, and they carry it with them.

Even as the HumaneWatch effort keeps growing, that's not going to be enough.

You have to take this raw material and turn it into meaningful communication with your elected representatives. You have to insert it in every comment you leave on a regulatory docket. You have to put some of it in every press release you issue. Consider how many more people would take your side if you found ways to promote the www.HumaneWatch.org website.

Look at it this way: The Humane Society of the United States only has about 450,000 active members. But your retail packages, labels, billboards, and ads reach somewhere around 300 million Americans. You're sitting on the mother lode of PR influence in the form of your commercial contact with ordinary consumers—the vast majority of whom would take your side if they knew all the facts.

It's no longer good enough to limit yourselves to communicating about your "animal rights problem" inside the industry. Start reaching out to your real customers: the American public.

The bottom line

Like it or not, you're in an endless war with the HSUS and its fellow devotees of the animal-rights religion. In particular, HSUS's 700-plus employees plan to be agitating against you long enough to retire at a ripe old age, and Wayne Pacelle has already sunk more than \$11 million into their pension plan since 2004.

Whether you do it in a mild fashion through your industry associations or with the bare knuckles of third-party organizations that specialize in penetrating the public consciousness (or better yet, do both), the time for sitting on the sidelines is long past.

If you believe in what you do, stand up and be counted. And wear a helmet. The coming battles are not for the fainthearted. ■

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