

HUMANE ACTIVIST

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*HIGHER
STANDARDS*

USDA should stop giving abusive puppy mills a free pass



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The Humane Society Legislative Fund is a social welfare organization incorporated under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code and formed in 2004 as a separate lobbying affiliate of the Humane Society of the United States. HSLF works to pass animal protection laws at the state and federal levels, to educate the public about animal protection issues and to support humane candidates for office. On the web at hslf.org.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Dear friends,

The recent appointment of David Bernhardt to lead the Department of the Interior ensures that the current administration's track record of putting the interests of industry above those of our nation's wildlife will persist.

Bernhardt, a trophy hunting supporter and former agriculture and oil industry lobbyist, was reportedly instrumental in the department's rollback of a ban on cruel and unsporting trophy hunting practices on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska in 2017. The new interior secretary will be the final

sign off on a similar proposal to weaken protections for grizzly bears and wolves on federal lands in Alaska, which is still pending as we go to press.

To make sure Bernhardt and the public know what's at stake, HSLF released disturbing video footage of a father and son, Andrew and Owen Renner, who shot and killed a mother bear and her two cubs in Alaska. More than 2 million people watched the video, which shows the men celebrating and saying, "We go where we want to kill [expletive]."

It's rare when the impact of policies that allow trophy hunting and other lethal activities is captured in such chilling detail, since trophy hunting typically happens out of public view. But in this case, a video camera recorded the killings and the attempts by the Renners to destroy the evidence of their crime. The pair pleaded guilty to a variety of charges and were sentenced in January.

The only reason the Renners were held accountable is because they committed their poaching act in an area where it wasn't permitted. This slaughter would have been perfectly legal had it happened on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska. And if the proposed federal rule goes into effect, more of Alaska's federal lands will become fair game for trophy hunters like them.

We hope the public outrage over these killings will cause Bernhardt to think twice about whether it's good policy—and good PR for the department—to expand practices like shooting bears, wolves and their young in their dens or using bait and dogs to hunt bears.

The day after we released the footage, at Bernhardt's Senate confirmation hearing, a spectator seated behind him donned a swamp creature mask, making for an amusing visual and highlighting the secretary's ties to the industries he is now charged with regulating. While we can't take credit for that stunt, we can appreciate the message and the reasons behind it: Our fragile resources need careful stewardship, and the decisions that Bernhardt and his colleagues will make are life-and-death ones.

Sincerely,

Sara Amundson
President
Humane Society Legislative Fund



Proposed changes to USDA licensing requirements could force some of the nation's worst puppy mill operators to clean up their act or go out of business.

measures to ban or restrict the sale of puppy mill dogs in retail pet stores. But oversight by the USDA has remained woefully inadequate.

We've repeatedly petitioned the agency to crack down on the puppy mill industry's worst abuses. And in a hopeful sign that change is coming, the USDA has proposed a new rule that would make several updates to its licensing requirements.

Currently, the USDA doesn't require licensees to show that their facility complies with AWA standards before renewing their license. Under the proposed rule, licenses won't be automatically renewed. Breeders and other licensees will have to pass an inspection before obtaining a new license. The agency is also proposing that licensees get a new license if they change the number or type of animals in their care. Additionally, business owners will be required to disclose any animal cruelty convictions at the local, state or federal level during the last three years. (The current regulations only require such disclosure if the applicant has pleaded no contest or guilty to animal cruelty charges within the past year.)

The proposed changes would also close a loophole in the law that has allowed puppy breeders and roadside zoo operators whose licenses have been revoked for severe or multiple violations to continue doing business as usual by relicensing under a family member's name.

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Higher standards

REGULATORY CHANGES COULD HELP WEED OUT THE WORST ACTORS IN PUPPY MILLS AND ROADSIDE ZOOS

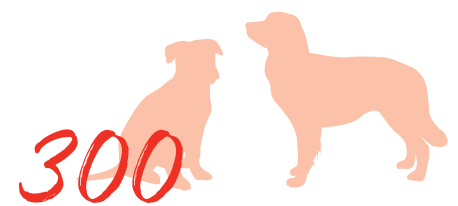
IT'S AN INFURIATING REALITY: In a nation of dog lovers, commercial breeders—even those with multiple violations of the Animal Welfare Act—are allowed to profit off the backs of dogs and puppies kept in conditions that no reasonable person would consider humane.

Consider Pamela Baldwin, owner of Samples Creek Kennel in Edgar Springs, Missouri. Her facility made the Humane Society of the United States annual Horrible Hundred list of puppy mills every year since 2013. State and federal inspectors consistently documented filthy conditions and dogs who were underweight, sick or injured.

Yet despite a long list of violations, for years Samples Creek Kennel maintained its license with the U.S. Department of Agriculture—the federal agency in charge of enforcing the AWA—and sold puppies to a massive dog broker that ships puppies to pet stores across the country.

It took action by the Missouri attorney general's office, which filed a lawsuit in October 2018 against Baldwin for violating state laws, to hold her accountable. A state agriculture department spokesperson confirmed to HSLF that Baldwin no longer has a state license to sell dogs. Animal advocates applauded the state's action, but were left wondering why the USDA allowed Samples Creek Kennel to operate for so many years.

HSLF has long fought for stronger laws and increased enforcement to crack down on puppy mills. In recent years, two states (California and Maryland) and 300 localities have enacted



localities and two states have enacted measures to ban or restrict the sale of puppy mill dogs in retail pet stores.

FEDERAL OVERSIGHT

If passed, the policy changes would mandate hands-on veterinary exams and vaccinations for all dogs in AWA-regulated facilities (such as puppy mills and research laboratories) and other commonsense measures like requiring that dogs and cats have access to fresh water. Also, under the proposed revisions, individuals would no longer be able to obtain exhibitor licenses solely to skirt local laws that restrict the private possession of dangerous exotic and wild animals.

“This has the potential to improve the lives of tens of thousands of animals now languishing in the squalor of puppy mills and roadside zoos,” says HSLF president Sara Amundson.

While the proposed rule is a step in the right direction, HSLF would like to see it expanded to strengthen the care standards for dogs. First, the USDA should prohibit the use of wire or grid flooring, which can injure dogs’ legs and feet. Second, the USDA shouldn’t allow the stacking of cages, which can impede airflow and prevent proper sanitation. Third, the USDA should double the minimum cage size for dogs to promote their mental and physical health.

Amundson remains optimistic that the agency is taking a serious look at the licensing process and standards of care and will move forward with changes that address the most pressing welfare needs of animals at puppy mills, exhibitors and research facilities.

While lobbying to get the proposed rule over the finish line, HSLF is pushing for USDA inspectors to diligently document all AWA violations and make the information available to the public. HSLF is also attacking puppy mill cruelty through legislation.

The Welfare of Our Friends (WOOF) Act (H.R. 1002) would mandate many of the same changes contained in the USDA’s proposed rule. To date, the WOOF Act has garnered more than 60 bipartisan co-sponsors and broad public support.

“We’re not placing all our bets on agency reforms,” Amundson says. “We know from experience it takes a multipronged strategy to win meaningful changes for animals.”

→ **SPEAK OUT:** Ask your U.S. representative to co-sponsor the Welfare of Our Friends (WOOF) Act (H.R. 1002) to crack down on puppy mill abuses.



The HSUS’s John Goodwin helps transport some of the 54 German shepherds rescued from a Maryland puppy mill in early 2019.

LEGISLATIVE LINEUP



► HERE IS A SAMPLING

of HSLF-supported animal protection bills before the U.S. Congress. It’s vital that you call, email or write your federal legislators to let them know your views on these bills. To identify your legislators and how to reach them, go to hslf.org/leglookup or call 202-676-2314.

When you call a legislator’s office, ask to speak with the staff person handling animal protection issues. Give the bill number and the name of the bill or issue. Be polite, brief and to the point. If you plan to visit Washington, D.C., make an appointment to meet with your legislators or their staff to discuss animal issues. We can help you with background information and may be able to accompany you. Please note: Due to security procedures, regular mail to members of Congress may be significantly delayed. Calls and emails are the best ways to contact your legislators about pending bills.

For the latest about all animal protection bills, visit legislation.hslf.org.

Pets and Cruelty



Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act
H.R. 724 / S. 479

To prohibit extreme acts of animal cruelty when they occur on federal property or in interstate or foreign commerce. Sponsors: Reps. Deutch, D-Fla.; Buchanan, R-Fla. / Sens. Toomey, R-Pa.; Blumenthal, D-Conn.

Welfare of Our Friends (WOOF) Act
H.R. 1002

To prohibit commercial dog breeders whose licenses have been revoked from obtaining a new USDA breeding license and to close related loopholes. Sponsors: Reps. Fitzpatrick, R-Pa.; Crist, D-Fla.; Thompson, R-Pa.; McGovern, D-Pa.

Disaster Preparedness



Providing Responsible Emergency Plans for Animals at Risk of Emerging Disasters (PREPARED) Act
H.R. 1042

To require facilities regulated under the Animal Welfare Act to submit annual plans for emergency situations, including plans for evacuations, backup food and water, and veterinary care in response to natural disasters, power outages, animal escapes and other emergencies. Sponsors: Reps. Titus, D-Nev.; King, R-N.Y.

Wildlife



Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act
H.R. 737 / S. 877

To prohibit possession, sale or purchase of shark fins or any product containing shark fins, and to establish penalties for violations. Sponsors: Reps. Sablan, D-N. Marianas; McCaul, R-Texas / Sens. Booker, D-N.J.; Capito, R-W.Va. (Approved by Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee in April.)

Big Cat Public Safety Act
H.R. 1380

To prohibit possession and breeding of lions, tigers, leopards and other big cat species by individuals and unqualified exhibitors. Sponsors: Reps. Quigley, D-Ill.; Fitzpatrick, R-Pa.

Equines



Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act
H.R. 693 / S. 1007

To amend the Horse Protection Act to end the failed system of industry self-policing and use of devices integral to soring, and to establish felony penalties for this cruel practice. Sponsors: Reps. Schrader, D-Ore.; Yoho, R-Fla.; Cohen, D-Tenn.; Estes, R-Kan.; Schakowsky, D-Ill.; Collins, R-N.Y. / Sens. Crapo, R-Idaho; Warner, D-Va.

Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act
H.R. 961

To ban domestic horse slaughter, stop the export of horses for slaughter abroad and prevent health threats posed by meat from horses raised in the U.S. and given drugs unsafe for humans. Sponsors: Reps. Schakowsky, D-Ill.; Buchanan, R-Fla.

Horseracing Integrity Act
H.R. 1754

To end doping of all race horses, including same-day drugging, by putting a new nonprofit headed by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency in charge of setting national uniform rules, testing standards and enforcement processes for medication use in horse racing. Sponsors: Reps. Tonko, D-N.Y.; Barr, R-Ky.

PROTECTING EQUINES



Safeguards reinstated

Agency revokes policy that put wild horses at risk

IT'S A RARE DAY IN WASHINGTON when anyone willingly reverses course on their own policy. But that's what happened in March when the Bureau of Land Management issued a memo announcing the agency had rescinded a 2018 policy that allowed individuals and groups to purchase 25 wild horses and burros at once with no time limit between purchases. Animal advocates had opposed the policy, which they viewed as an open invitation to "kill buyers" who send horses to Canada or Mexico for slaughter.

Thankfully, the BLM, which is mandated by Congress to protect the iconic wild horses and burros of the American West, has returned to a policy that allows no more than four animals to be purchased over a six-month period, a policy put into place in 2014 after investigations revealed a notorious kill buyer had bought nearly 1,800 wild horses.

Gillian Lyons, senior regulatory specialist for HSLF, wasn't surprised to learn about the agency revoking the 2018 policy. "A lot of people pushed back," Lyons says, including members of Congress, animal advocacy groups and everyday taxpayers who complained that the regulation put the animals in danger.

HSLF and other advocacy organizations have long urged the agency to expand its use of nonlethal fertility control vaccines to manage the wild horses and burros. But this advice has been largely ignored by the BLM, which rounds up "surplus" wild horses and burros and places most in federal holding pens, without implementing sufficient fertility control to maintain population levels after removals. There are currently 50,000 wild horses living in these government facilities.

Lyons suspects the 2018 policy change was the result of BLM employees attempting to thin the number of animals held in these expensive facilities, without considering all the consequences. "They weren't looking in the same way that advocates do at what loopholes this policy would create," she says.

For years, HSLF has partnered with members of Congress

to reinstate language in annual federal appropriations bills that prevents the destruction of healthy wild horses and burros and to protect the animals from being sold to kill buyers. We're also continuing to work with members of Congress to pass the Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act (H.R. 961), which would end the transport of wild and domestic American horses, burros and other equines to foreign slaughter plants and ensure that horse slaughter plants on U.S. soil remain shuttered.

Rep. Raúl Grijalva, D-Ariz., the new chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, was among the members of Congress who spoke out strongly against the 2018 policy change, continuing work he has done throughout his congressional career to protect horses. In a statement to HSLF, he applauded the agency's decision to reinstate the earlier safeguards, which are designed to prevent unscrupulous kill buyers from purchasing large numbers of these iconic animals and funneling them to slaughter.

"I'm glad to see BLM has decided to reverse this reckless and unnecessary policy," Grijalva said. "My colleagues and I look forward to working with BLM to pursue proven, cost-effective methods to manage these animals and meet the needs of the American people in a sustainable way."



Rep. Raúl Grijalva

The tiger next door

TRAGIC EVENTS ILLUSTRATE NEED FOR BIG CAT LEGISLATION

IT COULD BE THE OPENING SCENE from an absurd comedy or horror movie: A person looking for a private place to smoke marijuana wanders into an abandoned house and comes face to face with a tiger in a shoddy, unlocked cage.

Yet that's exactly what happened in Houston, Texas, earlier this year, and it was a depressing reminder of our nation's dangerous obsession with exotic pets—one that consigns thousands of tigers and other big cat species to miserable lives and puts communities and first responders at risk.

While Houston bans the private keeping of tigers and other big cats, a string of horrific incidents shows how little the state does to curb the dangerous trade in these powerful predators. In 2016, the Conroe Police Department received a report of a tiger roaming a residential neighborhood after an escape from someone's backyard. In 2001, in Lee County, a 3-year-old boy was killed by a relative's pet tiger. In Channelview, a 4-year-old boy had his arm torn off by a 400-pound tiger in 2000.

This isn't just a Texas problem: Big cats have been involved in more than 380 dangerous incidents in 46 states and the District of Columbia since 1990. Twenty-four people (including five children) have been killed, and hundreds of others have lost limbs or suffered



While some captive big cats, like these two tigers rescued from a roadside zoo in Mississippi in 2012, end up in reputable sanctuaries, most end their days in cramped backyard cages or squalid roadside zoos.

other, often traumatic injuries. Yet, unbelievably, four states—Alabama, Nevada, North Carolina and Wisconsin—still have almost no laws on keeping dangerous wild animals as pets.

To ensure the safety of people across the nation, Congress must pass the Big Cat Public Safety Act (H.R. 1380). Reintroduced in February by Reps. Michael Quigley, D-Ill., and Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., the bill would prohibit the sale, possession and breeding of big cat species by individuals and unqualified exhibitors. The bill provides reasonable exemptions for professionally operated wildlife sanctuaries and exhibitors.

A crucial provision in the law would prohibit contact between the public and large cats. Hundreds of big cats are bred every year at roadside zoos to produce a steady supply of cubs for temporary use in money-making public photo-ops and play sessions. By the time they're just a few months old, the cubs are typically offloaded to substandard facilities or private menageries. Some die as a result of poor care, and some are killed. In many cases, taxpayers and humane organizations eventually bear the tremendous costs of caring for these animals.

“Big cats are some of the world's most majestic wild animals,” says HSLF president Sara Amundson. “They should not be penned in as ‘pets’ or exploited for selfies for a fee taken from an unsuspecting public.”

The Houston tiger is among the few lucky ones: He now lives at the 1,400-acre Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch in Texas, which is operated by the Fund for Animals in partnership with the Humane Society of the United States.

While placement at accredited sanctuaries is the best possible outcome for victims of the exotic pet trade, Amundson says, as long as people are allowed to breed and sell these animals for a quick buck, there will never be enough space for them all.

→ **SPEAK OUT:** Urge your U.S. representative to co-sponsor the Big Cat Public Safety Act (H.R. 1380).

THE EYES HAVE IT



Sen. Debbie Stabenow accepts an award from the HSLF's Sara Amundson (left) and the HSUS's Kitty Block (right).

→ In April, HSLF announced the winners of its 2018 Humane Awards. **SENS. PAT ROBERTS**, R-Kan., and **DEBBIE STABENOW**, D-Mich., and **REPS. MIKE CONAWAY**, R-Texas, and **COLLIN PETERSON**, D-Minn., who served as the chairs and ranking members of the Senate and House agriculture committees, garnered top honors for their work to include several animal protection laws in the recently enacted farm bill and for rejecting an amendment offered by Iowa Republican Rep. Steve King. The controversial King amendment aimed to undermine the ability of states to regulate agricultural products sold within their borders. HSLF also recognized 169 other legislators who led on legislative or agency matters or achieved perfect scores on the 2018 *Humane Scorecard*. “The animal protection community is grateful to all of these members of Congress who are helping to forge a path to a more humane future,” says HSLF president Sara Amundson.

→ Legislators and wildlife advocates continue to speak out about the hundreds of miles of razor wire installed by U.S. troops along walls and fences dividing the U.S. and Mexico. In December, **U.S. REP. VICENTE GONZALEZ**, D-Texas, wrote to U.S. Customs and Border Protection demanding the wire be removed due to the dangers it presents to people, wildlife and livestock. In an interview with United Press International, Montana **STATE SEN. MIKE PHILLIPS**, D-Bozeman, warned about the threat to endangered Mexican gray wolves. Phillips, a conservation scientist who directs the Turner Endangered Species Fund, explained the wire could prevent the wolves from breeding with populations across the border, causing genetic diversity to suffer in the already tiny population. Conservationists are also concerned that jaguars who live on the border of Arizona and Mexico could be caught in the wire.

→ **REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ**, D-N.Y., and **SEN. EDWARD MARKEY**, D-Mass., are making climate change a central issue of the 2020 presidential race. Ocasio-Cortez and Markey introduced an ambitious 14-page resolution, dubbed the Green New Deal, designed to make the U.S. carbon-neutral by 2030. Already, all six Democratic senators running for president have signed on as co-sponsors of S. Res. 59, the Senate’s version of the measure.

→ During an otherwise staid Natural Resources subcommittee hearing on March 7, **REP. JOE CUNNINGHAM**, D-S.C., sounded off about the dangers seismic testing poses to North Atlantic right whales. Cunningham blasted an air horn in response to Trump administration officials and oil industry bigwigs who claim there’s no evidence that seismic air gun tests used for offshore oil exploration present a serious threat to these whales, one of the world’s most imperiled mammal species. Cunningham, who worked as an ocean engineer, asked Chris Oliver, an assistant administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, whether he would find the air horn disruptive if he depended on sound for communicating and hunting food. After Oliver admitted that he would, Cunningham explained that seismic air guns are roughly 16,000 times louder than the air horn he used.

