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## AgriTalk Interview With Wayne Pacelle

June 30, 2009

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AgriTalk interview with Host Mike Adams, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
featuring Wayne Pacelle, President and CEO  
Humane Society of the United States

(listen to the podcast [here](#))

**Mike Adams** – We have had a lot questions about where you come down on animal rights and welfare. The livestock industry and people I know believe in the humane treatment of animals. There is a difference between animal welfare and animal rights. How do you define the two? Are they same or different?

**Wayne Pacelle** – We at the Humane Society of the United States don't talk about animal rights, but human responsibility. That places us more with the comments that you represent from the agriculture community. In almost al of our campaigns and activities, whether it's Prop 2 in California or prior ballot measures in Florida or Arizona, or in our Hallmark/Westland investigation, where we exposed the terrible mistreatment at a cull cow slaughter plant of the spent dairy cows, or in some other campaigns, those fit squarely in the realm of animal welfare. They relate not whether animals should be used for food, but how they are treated during production, transport and slaughter.

I get distressed when I read so much of the ag trade press and when I heard spokespersons from the Farm Bureau caricature the positions of me or the HSUS. It's easy to knock down a straw man if you make that straw man look like a nut. If you look at the actual things we do, and I do insist that people look at them, and we're transparent, you can go to [www.HSUS.org](#) and my blog where I write 5 days a week and see what we campaign and talk about. We are focused on matters of decency and mercy toward animals. We'll have some disagreements depending on what your orientation is, but I don't think anyone can reasonably claim that our work is moving in the direction of eliminating animal agriculture as some of the folks in the industry keep repeating.

**Adams:** So your intent is not to shut down the livestock industry? Is that what you are saying?

**Pacelle:** Yes, that is correct.

**Adams:** Some would say if you are out there working to get things passed like Prop 2 in California that leads to higher cost of production putting producers out of business or resulting in higher food costs, that in a way is an attempt to get people to stop eating meat. Is that your agenda?

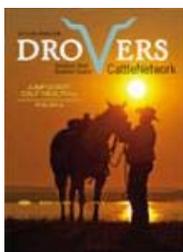
**Pacelle:** No. We have to drop the paranoia and look at the situation in another way. It is my core belief that Americans are going to continue to eat meat, milk and egg products. That is the way it is. These are long-standing cultural practices. Our

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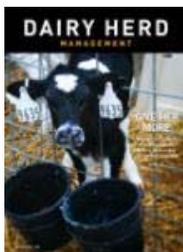
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diet has been at work for a long time with people and it will not change certainly not overnight and it's not going to change over a decade or 50 years. We do think there are issues with the current state of production and the per capita consumption of animal products. We've said many times that our view with the effects of concentrated animal feeding operations on the environment, with the contribution that livestock concentration makes to greenhouse gas emissions there are sensible, practical, compelling reasons to have people think about eating a little less, whether that's one day a week or one fewer meal a week where people reduce their consumption, HSUS has associated itself with those ideas but I don't think in any kind of practical way one can say we are trying to eliminate animal agriculture.

**Adams:** You talked about that you don't expect people to stop eating meat, but I read that you are a vegetarian and there seems to be a lot of influence within HSUS for the vegan way, and it looks like to many people that is a big part of your agenda, to push that lifestyle. Is that correct or not?

**Pacelle:** It's not correct, actually. The most I ever talk about veganism is when I talk to the ag community or hunting lobby or someone who is trying to diminish or poke a hole in our work. If you listen to me talking about Prop 2 or any campaign whether it's clubbing seals or combating dog fighting, I never bring it up. My personal dietary choices are my choices, but the folks within industry bring it up and I rarely do. Our board of directors is a national volunteer board of directors. Very few of them are vegetarian. I have been since I've been a teenager. Whatever I do in my personal life does not necessarily reflect the policies of HSUS and we support certified humane programs, we support other farmers, we work with farmers, we think farming is a noble profession.

I think it's most important to recognize that we all need to eat and consume food. None of us suggest we want to go back to a hunting and gathering strategy. Modern agriculture is here to stay and it's really about how it's done. Putting animals and animal welfare into the calculation. Agriculture in my view got lost when it came to animal welfare. It was all about production and it was all about economics. Animal welfare got lost. You can talk about husbandry standards, you can talk about how you are not going to be productive if animals are not treated well, but we know that welfare and production are not tied closely. We know animals can suffer a great deal and still be productive. The basic views we espouse on confinement issues where veal calves or breeding sows or laying hens are in such small cages they can barely turn around, stand up, lie down, engage in the most basic behaviors is a view that agriculture represents that is out of step with common notions of what agriculture is about.

You can pillory HSUS, exaggerate what we are about, but at the end of the day the public is not going to make its decisions about these matters on what agriculture groups or HSUS says. They are going to look at what the ballot question and the legislative proposal offers. If we say animals should be humanely slaughtered, they shouldn't be dragged if they are downers or moved with a forklift, or we say animals should be allowed to move if they are living for a year, two years or three years and not be crammed into a cage, I think the public will go with our view because that is the common sense view of the world. You can have an echo chamber within the world of industrial agriculture or confinement agriculture and people will say they are just a bunch of vegans and vegetarians that want to end our way of life. That is not the debate. The debate is about confinement systems, humane transport and humane slaughter.

**Adams:** If I come to your office, I assume you have a cafeteria there, can I find meat in that cafeteria?

**Pacelle:** We don't have a cafeteria. People bring their lunch or go out. We don't have a food service line.

**Adams:** When you go into a state, you come in and start talking about changes in livestock production practices. The question that has to be asked is: what is your expertise or the expertise that HSUS has that makes your group more of an authority on animal welfare than say the veterinarians or industry professionals who are caring for animals on a daily basis? Why is your way necessarily better than what the industry is saying?

**Pacelle:** Let me mention that it's not just California that approved the ballot initiative to restrict certain intensive confinement practices. With the phase out acknowledging that farmers do need to transition and that you can't flip the switch overnight, but Arizona approved the measure by a similar margin, nearly 63% and Florida voters by a wide margin also approved the measure. In a number of other states we sat down with the leaders of the agriculture community and negotiated a compromise. Kind of in contrast to this very dogmatic view that comes across in the ag trade press about HSUS. We're very much willing to compromise, we're willing to talk, we're willing to work through problems and understand the dilemmas and economic challenges that large scale producers have.

We're willing to sit down. We never really just present things as take it or leave it. A ballot initiative is a last resort after legislatures fail to act and after state ag departments fail to act and after leaders of agriculture groups fail to act. We prefer not to resort to initiatives. They are costly, they are divisive and we always prefer another route. We won't just completely relent and allow what we regard as a dangerous and inhumane situation to proceed.

**Adams:** Most in the agriculture industry or livestock industry feel that you're not willing to come to some middle ground or negotiation. They feel you come in and it's "our way or no way" and that you won't accept any compromise on these issue.

**Pacelle:** That is the caricature that is the kind of one way writing of the situation, but if you look at the reality, we did three ballot initiatives after discussions and talks failed and we reached an accommodation in several other states. I sat around with leaders of the agriculture community in Colorado, in multiple meetings, there were similar processes, not quite as detailed and face-to-face in other states. But we relented on the issue of battery cage egg production in Colorado when that issue came to the table and the ag community was willing to have a shorter phase out for veal production and a longer phase out for gestation crates for pig production. We went up to 10 years for the phase out on that issue. To me that is plain evidence that we are willing to compromise.

Our preferred measure would be very quick turnaround on these confinement methods. We completely left one issue aside and we extended the time frame on the big issue because there is a lot of pig production in Colorado. There is the rhetoric

and the reality. Look at the reality. We are very willing to talk. I just think the ag community and there are certain voices within the ag community who pound the table and exhibit a very macho view of the issue and by golly we are not going to talk to these people and we're not going to cave. We're willing to talk. We're always willing to talk. It's why I'm on your show today and why I have appeared at many other forums with the agriculture community. We want to have dialogue. We don't demonize individuals, we're concerned about production systems, we're concerned about trends in agriculture where animal welfare has been really subverted to other priorities.

**Adams:** When a group of veterinarians, if they would say this particular production practice, whatever it may be, stalls or confinement or whatever, if they say they think the animals are being humanely cared for in that type of system and you feel they are not, what makes your group more of an authority to say you are right, our (HSUS) changes that we are proposing have to be implemented and they are wrong in saying the system being used is a good one? What gives you that authority?

**Pacelle:** There is no authority, it's just we live in a representative democracy. We do have direct democracy in some states provided by the state constitution to allow for public policy decisions-making. Science is a big part of it. Let's be clear that all of the science doesn't rest on one side. You can have scientists who work for industry -- it doesn't have to be animal agriculture, it could be any industry -- if scientists who work for the tobacco industry for years said smoking doesn't cause problems to one's health you also had scientists on the other side. You can find a scientist on any side of almost any debate.

The question is where is the preponderance of the science? Where is the careful work of the scientists? Science really doesn't give us ultimate answers. It gives us options and it's an evaluative tool to look at these questions. There are all sorts of science on our side. A lot of the science in Europe dealing with the battery cages, there was a study of more than 2,000 laying hen populations and came to the conclusion that the battery cage was fundamentally inhumane because it inhibited the behaviors, the most basic behaviors of the lay hens. That doesn't mean that if they are out of the cage that there wouldn't be some more aggression or doesn't mean if they are in an outside system they would be more vulnerable to predators. There are positive and negative aspects to most of the housing systems. There's a fundamental problem with the battery cage operation that has been supported by a tremendous amount of science. The most serious sort of science, but again, you can have a scientist who is not rigorous or who is completely biased or in the pocket of a particular group, one side or the other.

**Adams:** Let's move to the state of Ohio. There they are proposing coming up with a livestock care standards board that would be comprised of experts in livestock and poultry care, including family farmers, veterinarians, one of whom would probably be the state veterinarian, a food safety expert, a representative of a local humane society, two members from statewide farm organizations, the dean of an Ohio agriculture college and members representing Ohio consumers. That is what being proposed. You have come out criticizing that particular idea. Why would you be against that?

**Pacelle:** Because one has to understand the genesis of the idea in order to see it in its proper context. I went to Columbus, Ohio and sat down with the leaders of almost all the major animal agriculture commodity groups including the Farm Bureau. The pork producers, cattlemen's association, poultry folks were there. We had most of the major players at the table and said we would like to engage in a discussion about how we address these issues. We said obviously you know about Prop 2 and it would be our interest in achieving the same set of reforms that California voters approved and some of the same reforms that Arizona and Florida voters approved but we're willing to talk to you before we go down that road.

We were kindly treated at the meeting where we talked and the folks listened and we were told that they were going to get back to us but we didn't hear anything back from them. It was all monologue on our side. They proceeded to essentially develop a campaign and to push this constitutional amendment to amend Ohio's constitution to create an all powerful body to set standards. So to have 12 or 13 people set the rules for the millions of people in Ohio who are food consumers. We don't think that is the way to go. We could have sat down and negotiated that. We could have had some other terms and could have been more balanced but as it's currently constructed it's clearly designed to thwart the ballot initiative.

**Adams:** But it has to go to the voters. They would have to approve it. Isn't that the same as you would have to do with a ballot initiative like you did in California?

**Pacelle:** Well yes that's true, but again it's designed to prevent this initiative from taking effect. It's clearly a blocking maneuver. I really don't think that it changes the equation at all. You have the same people kind of making decisions now in the realm of agriculture with no checks on intensive confinement and no reasonable humane transport or slaughter standards. You essentially have the same people controlling it. You could have minority representation of a local humane society which truly may have no familiarity with agriculture. Say what you want about HSUS but we have professional animal scientists, we have a good amount of experience with the agriculture issues. We have two departments devoted to that issue.

**Adams:** Do you spend money on animal welfare research?

**Pacelle:** What kind of research?

**Adams:** Do you spend any of your funds on what is the best way to care for animals?

**Pacelle:** Well yes we do but you have to remember that we work on all issues of kind of human animal relationships whether it's companion animals or horses or animals used in laboratories or animals in agriculture or other settings. We're not a research-oriented organization. That is not what we do. We don't fund research. We don't fund every local humane society.

**Adams:** Do you have plans for a ballot initiative in Ohio or any other state in the future?

**Pacelle:** We're committed to stopping the intensive confinement of animals. Veal crates, gestation crates, battery cages.

We'll continue to work on that on all fronts. Ohio is very much still top of mind for us despite this effort which I think was a really bad-faith effort by the Farm Bureau to kind of short-circuit discussions and thwart the initiatives.

**Adams:** Any other states?

**Pacelle:** We're looking at various places.

**Adams:** There are a lot of questions that come in about the amount of money you are able to raise and you have been very successful at that. A lot of people want to know why isn't more of that money used for actual animal shelters and adoption of animals? You talk about caring for or rescuing pets, why isn't more of your money actually going right to animal shelters and those types of programs?

**Pacelle:** I know a lot of folks in the agriculture community, the more large scale agriculture community that would love us not to look at slaughter and transport and production practices and put all of our money into animal shelters. The fact is there are 10 billion animals raised for food in this country and 7-8 million who go into shelters. We put a lot of energy on that. We are working aggressively to address that problem. We are rolling out a major national advertising campaign, the shelter pet project, in mid-July. We provide a lot of support to animal shelters. We actually run five animal care centers. We have an emergency services unit, we have a rural veterinary services unit. There is no organization in the nation that does more direct care services for animals than HSUS. None. Not one.

This notion that we don't care for animals directly is completely false. But at the same time we don't just address the symptoms of the problem. We look where there are large numbers of animals used in society and we focus on what we regard to be as the most abusive treatment of the animals. That leads us to these inhumane slaughter practices, confinement practices and the like. So that is why we focus on it. I know some of your listeners would love for us to give all of our money to shelters so they could have a free-running field to do whatever they want to animals in agriculture but we're not going to

**Adams:** What percentage of your budget would you say goes to animal shelters?

**Pacelle:** It depends on how you define animal shelters. We run the largest trade show in the nation that services animal shelters. We publish the magazine of the field called *Animal Sheltering*, we do shelter evaluations, we give millions of dollars in grants, but when there is a puppy mill in Washington State or a dog fighting operation in Colorado, and the shelters can't handle that, we typically do the investigations, find out where the problem is and then send our emergency services unit in that helps shelters. The Shelter Pet Project alone – which is a national advertising campaign to drive adoptions to shelters – is expected to be \$40-80 million a year worth of advertising value. You can't quantify the work that we do, but again if people want us to spend all of our hard dollars on animal shelters, they can support their local humane society. We think that is fabulous and we support the shelters and we hope all of your listeners support their local animal shelter, but we have other issues we want to work on.

Dogs and cats are less than 1% of the animals in society. There are horses, there are farm animals, animals used in research, wild animals. We have program that address all of those issues. That's what the founders of the organization imagined the organization doing when it was created in the 1950s. It's how every CEO of the organization has imagined the work. It's how our entire 27-member national volunteer board of directions imagines the work of the organization. We're totally transparent in our work.

**Adams:** If you find an operation, whether it a livestock operation or a puppy mill or whatever, to be in violation of animal welfare regulations, if they are in the wrong, do you immediately put that word out or is there a lag time there? Are you waiting for the most publicity you can get out of it? If you know about things that are wrong, why aren't you right now saying this is wrong, something has to be done? Why is there a lag time on these things?

**Pacelle:** I'm preaching from the top of the mountain that there is something going wrong. That's why we are concerned about inherently inhumane systems that deny an animal the opportunity to move or stand up. If you are talking about the Hallmark/Westland case where it was HSUS that documented terrible abuse, where USDA had five inspectors and was allowing terrible abuse to go on, where there were 17 third-party audits hired by the slaughter plant and they basically got A+ ratings, we did not have confidence at that point that USDA would handle the situation appropriately.

**Adams:** Did you get straight to them as soon as you found out?

**Pacelle:** No, we went to the local prosecutor in San Bernardino County and they wanted to investigate and they asked us to keep the information quiet while they continued their investigation. At some point their investigation went on longer than I wanted to hold the information and we released the information to the press.

**Adams:** I want to ask a quick question about hunting. You have said, "If we could shut down all sport hunting in a moment we would."

**Pacelle:** I didn't say that.

**Adams:** This is a quote attributed to you by the Associated Press.

**Pacelle:** Stuff kicks around the Internet and they have been quoting stuff since the 1980s and 1990s. I have been with the organization since 1994. There has been so much fabrication out there.

**Adams:** Are you against hunting?

**Pacelle:** The HSUS position on hunting is on our website for anyone to see. We say and I've said this time and time again, we focus on the worst abuses. Canned hunts, bear baiting, contest shoots, shooting of endangered species, pure trophy

hunting. If you look at any of our campaigns, that is what we focus on.

**Adams:** Are you trying to shut down zoos and circuses from having animals?

**Pacelle:** Zoos, absolutely not. We work with many reputable zoos. We work with the accredited zoos on some programs and you can see from our website and our other campaigns that we have no campaigns to shut down zoos. That is a completely false characterization. The unregulated roadside zoos which confine animals and acquire them in disreputable ways and starve them are very much in our focus.

In terms of wild animals in circuses, we do not think that wild animals belong in circuses. Elephants traveling around to 50 or 75 or 150 cities a year in railroad cars being chained 22 hours a day constitutes inhumane treatment of these very intelligent, sociable animals. Yes, we are very concerned about terrible mistreatment of wild animals by the circus.

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