

Conversation with Paul Shapiro on July 15, 2013

Participants

- Paul Shapiro – Vice President, Farm Animal Protection, The Humane Society of the United States
- Alexander Berger – Senior Research Analyst, GiveWell
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Summary

GiveWell spoke with Paul Shapiro as part of its shallow investigation of efforts to improve animal welfare by addressing harms due to factory farming. Mr. Shapiro is the V.P. of the Farm Animal Protection team at the Humane Society of the United States, the largest animal welfare organization in the US.

Note: This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by Paul Shapiro in the conversation.

About the Humane Society of the United States' (HSUS) Farm Animal Protection (FAP) program

The importance of working on farm animal welfare

HSUS's mission is to help all animals, including dogs, cats, wildlife, and animals who are raised for food. While people generally recognize pets as individuals, they don't often see farm animals that way. Farm animals are also individuals; they have likes and dislikes, and they want to avoid suffering.

Farm animals are more than 9 out of 10 of all the animals who are institutionally killed in America. Other institutional uses of animals include experimentation and the fur, circus, and hunting industries; these uses together account for under 5% of total institutional animal usage.

In order to improve animal welfare, it is necessary to pursue reforms to end the industrial abuse of animals, but also to reduce the total number of animals raised for food in the first place. Currently, 9 billion land animals are raised for food each year. The agricultural systems needed to raise that many animals cannot have high animal welfare or be good for the environment.

What the Farm Animal Protection team does

The FAP team works on 4 main programs, often in collaboration with other parts of HSUS.

1. **Legislative campaigns** – HSUS promotes legislation to prohibit some of worst abuses of farm animals on factory farms. HSUS has helped to pass laws in 9 states to

- criminalize various factory farming practices (e.g., battery cages for egg-laying hens, gestation crates for pigs, and veal crates for calves).
2. **Bringing suit on behalf of farm animals** – HSUS’s Animal Protection Litigation department is active in the court room on issues directly related to the treatment of farm animals, and also indirectly, by suing companies for false advertising about the treatment of farm animals. While many cruel practices may still be legal, it is illegal to lie to consumers about them. Currently, HSUS is representing plaintiffs who are suing Perdue, a chicken producer, in a false advertising case.
 3. **Corporate campaigns** – HSUS works with the biggest food sellers (fast food sellers, grocery chains, etc.), to mandate that their meat, egg, and dairy suppliers improve animal welfare in their supply chains. In the last year, HSUS has made major announcements with about 60 different major food retailers, including McDonalds, Wendy's, Denny's, Safeway, and Costco, about reforms in their supply chains.
 4. **Meatless Mondays** – HSUS works with institutions, such as school districts and hospitals, to implement "Meatless Mondays." This program has benefits for public health and the environment in addition to animal welfare. HSUS recently got the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest school district in the country, to implement Meatless Mondays. This means that the 650,000 meals served in LA schools on a given day will now be meat-free at least once per week.

HSUS's budget allocations

How budget allocations are determined

HSUS's budget is determined in part by donor interest, because many donors restrict their donations to certain causes. HSUS distributes unrestricted funds to its campaigns based on its supporters' interests.

Many donors to animal protection charities don't always think in terms of the number of animals affected. Due to human psychology, we're often more motivated by individual stories and by helping animals who we're more familiar with. In general, people are more sympathetic to mammals, though the increasing interest in protection for chickens serves as a good example of how we do often care about birds, too.

HSUS does a lot of work for dogs and cats. This work includes spay and neuter campaigns, promoting adoption from animal shelters, and free veterinary care.

Budget allocation for farm animal welfare

Among the campaigns that do not target dogs and cats, farm animal protection is an important priority. HSUS has carried out multimillion-dollar campaigns on legislative initiatives, such as the Proposition 2 ballot measure in California, which succeeded in banning 3 of the worst factory farming practices. That campaign cost \$10 million over 2 years (four million of which came directly from HSUS, which was by far the biggest backer of the measure).

The FAP team currently has 11 full-time staff members. The FAP budget allocation is probably on the order of \$1 million, though this varies from year to year based on what it is working on. While FAP is the only department focused solely on farm animals, many other HSUS staff devote part of their time to farm animals as well, including staff litigators, lobbyists, and investigators. Overall, farm animal issues probably receive less than 5-10% of HSUS's overall budget.

Other campaigns

HSUS has other campaigns to end various practices, including horse slaughter, the use of chimpanzees in scientific experimentation, wearing fur as fashion, dog and cock fighting, and puppy mills.

Legislative advocacy

How HSUS decides which campaigns to work on

In deciding which campaigns to work on, HSUS asks three primary questions:

1. How many animals will be impacted and how much suffering will be reduced?
2. How likely are we to win?
3. What will it cost to win?

HSUS does extensive public opinion polling to help figure out what is tractable and what message will resonate with people. For factory farming campaigns, it often focuses its work on states with a large number of factory farms, but also campaigns in states with lots of consumers, even if they don't have as many factory farms.

Past legislative campaigns

In the case of Proposition 2 in California, HSUS conducted a poll in 2004 and found that public opinion could be improved when it came to the issue. After a few years, HSUS conducted another poll and found that California residents were then overwhelmingly supportive of farm animal welfare and said they would vote for Proposition 2 if it appeared on the ballot. HSUS then launched its campaign to get Proposition 2 on the ballot, and it passed in 2008. HSUS estimates that Proposition 2 will affect the lives of about 19 million farm animals when it takes effect in 2015.

HSUS has also conducted successful campaigns in Ohio, Florida, Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, Maine, Michigan, and Rhode Island.

Ongoing legislative campaigns

HSUS is currently working on a campaign to ban gestation crates in New Jersey. The bill passed through the state legislature but was then vetoed by Governor Chris Christie. HSUS will wage a campaign to override the veto in the legislature. This type of campaign requires significantly less funding than advocating for a ballot measure.

There is also a bill pending in the US Congress that would ban barren battery cages, but the meat industry is fighting hard to kill it, and it may not be feasible to defeat those interests in the Congress. If this fight is to be won in the Congress, it will be key to win more agricultural support for the legislation.

Other parties involved in legislative debates

Some major opponents to HSUS's legislative efforts at the state level are the National Pork Producers Council, Farm Bureau Federation, Center for Consumer Freedom (which is paid for by the meat industry), and the egg industry trade groups. The opponents are mainly national groups that have chapters in most states.

Sometimes academics play a role in these debates. For example, UC Davis put out a study to try to damage Proposition 2 during that campaign.

There are very few neutral parties involved in these debates. One group that many would consider as fitting this description was the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Protection, a panel of experts founded by the Pew Charitable Trust. The panel was chaired by a former governor of Kansas and included a former secretary of agriculture for the USDA, a dean of a veterinary school, as well as farmers, ranchers, and scientists. The group studied factory farming for 2.5 years and published a series of policy recommendations on how to improve agricultural sustainability in the US. Their report included a section on animal welfare, and recommended phasing out many of the same practices that HSUS is combating, such as gestation crates, veal crates, and battery cages. There has been some progress on these issues. There has been little progress on the Commission's other recommendations, such as those relating to the use of antibiotics and rural community health.

Advocacy strategies

The main advocacy strategies that HSUS employs are TV ads and online ads to shift public awareness, and in-district work to influence lawmakers, which includes directly contacting local legislators as well as grassroots organizing to get community groups involved and active on these issues.

If FAP was able to double its budget, Mr. Shapiro said that it would likely use additional funds for more advertising targeting both dietary change and legislative campaigns. Mr. Shapiro believes that advertising is an effective strategy and one that is used heavily by HSUS's opponents.

Focus of legislative advocacy: chickens

Much of farm animal advocacy focuses on chickens, because they represent the vast majority of land animals abused on factory farms and killed in the US. Excluding aquatic animals, 9 out of 10 animals that are killed in the US are farm animals, and more than 9 out of 10 of those farm animals are chickens. More than 90% of eggs come from laying hens who spend their whole lives locked inside of cages where they do not have enough space to spread their

wings. Legislative campaigns to improve the welfare of egg-laying hens focus on improving the conditions under which they live.

Chickens raised for meat, called "broilers," are bred to grow very fast so that they are obese at a young age; many broiler chickens are unable to walk because they collapse under their own weight; they are bred to suffer, no matter what their environment. The work done on behalf of broiler chickens is largely campaigns to reduce consumption; there is very little legislative advocacy done on behalf of broiler chickens.

HSUS's FAP has a website (farmanimalwelfare.org) that provides more information on farm animal welfare, including scientific research on the topic of how animals experience pain and suffering.

Reducing meat consumption

Trends in meat consumption

In 2007, the number of broiler chickens consumed in the US was about 9 billion, but for the past 5 years, that number has been about 8.5 billion, despite an increase in human population. This is a significant gain for animal welfare.

Causes of the decline in meat consumption

The percentage of Americans who are vegetarian has remained relatively constant for the past 30 years, however there has been a trend in non-vegetarians reducing their meat consumption, for reasons of health, animal welfare, and climate change. This has been influenced by campaigns like Meatless Mondays, as well as by books by Michael Pollan and Mark Bittman.

The meat industry does not see widespread strict vegetarianism or veganism as a realistic threat, but it does perceive meat reduction as a threat. Mr. Shapiro believes the farm animal welfare movement is one that should applaud progress towards meat reduction and not demand purity. Some people will be strict vegans and some will eat meat regularly, but will eat less of it as a result of advocacy and outreach; all of these people contribute to positive societal trends towards reduced meat consumption.

Changing individual behavior versus institutional reforms

While Mr. Shapiro believes that the most efficient way of reducing meat consumption is through large-scale institutional reforms, other work, such as handing out leaflets to encourage reduced meat consumption, can be a good use of volunteer time.

Other organizations working on farm animal welfare

There are a few groups doing similar work to HSUS on farm animal welfare. One way of assessing how effective these groups are is to pay attention to the factory farming industry perspective – to see which advocacy groups the industry is most concerned about, based on what is written in trade publications.

In addition to HSUS, there are a few other groups that seem to be highly effective on this metric:

- Mercy for Animals (approximate annual budget: \$2.5 million)
- Compassion over Killing (approximate annual budget: \$1 million)
- The Humane League (approximate annual budget: less than \$500,000)
- Farm Sanctuary (approximate annual budget: \$9 million)

Compassion over Killing and Mercy for Animals have litigation programs, but these organizations are not as focused on litigation as HSUS. These groups are more focused on undercover investigations and TV and online ad campaigns encouraging people to change their diets and to support other positive reforms for farm animals.

Farm Sanctuary's approach is to improve individual animal lives by creating sanctuaries for farm animals, and also to build support for farm animal advocacy by allowing people to meet and connect with these animals, thereby increasing how much people care for the welfare of farm animals.

Other people for GiveWell to talk to about farm animal welfare

- Nick Cooney, author of *Change of Heart*, founder of the Humane League and currently working at Farm Sanctuary.
- Bruce Friedrich, currently serving as the Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives at Farm Sanctuary.

All GiveWell conversations are available at <http://www.givewell.org/conversations>