

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) opposes the auctioning off, selling, or donation of live animals for use in charity fundraisers, lotteries, promotional distributions, or other events. This includes fundraisers carried on in person, online, over the phone, or through other media channels.

Bringing a pet into the home is a commitment that should last ten to twenty years. Companion animal and human relationships are more successful when they are considered carefully, and embarked upon with an understanding of the commitment (emotional, physical, and financial) and responsibility required. These are things not necessarily considered by someone at a fundraiser reacting to an impulse to “win” or desire to outdo a fellow bidder.

Auctions, raffles, and similar events using live animals encourage impulse acquisition of a pet. There is no way for the potential pet owner to interact in any meaningful way with the pet prior to taking him home, and there is no way to screen those potential pet owners to ensure that the pet has a suitable home to go to. Although the fundraiser’s attendees may be financially solvent, animal shelters receive dogs and cats every day from people who spent hundreds of dollars purchasing a pet but didn’t spend the appropriate amount of time and energy considering what it requires to be a responsible pet caregiver.

The Humane Society of the United States believes any fundraising event should not include items considered harmful or contrary to the mission of that charity. Instead, fundraising items for a charity should be offered in the spirit with which they are intended, in order to foster the mission of the charity they are representing. In addition, any items offered in a fundraising event should not be harmful or conflict with the missions of other charitable organizations. For example, items like cigars should not be considered appropriate for a cancer fundraising benefit. Along these lines, any inclination to use an animal related item in a fundraising event should be thought over carefully to determine whether that item would be promoting the right animal welfare message.

Every year, millions of wonderful, healthy animals in shelters wait for people to give them a home, most already spayed or neutered and with current vaccinations. Shelters also screen animals for adoption so that they can make a great match between animals and their new families. Plus, adoption is one important way to reduce the number of animals euthanized in America each year.

Auctioning off an animal to the highest bidder with no concern for his or her future or for the undue hardship placed on a family who may bring the wrong type of pet home on a whim is not only irresponsible, but also unethical. This is a poor example for a charity to set, and we hope that any charities considering hosting an event using live animals as prizes will take this to heart, and choose a more humane method of fundraising.