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NGO in general consultative status  
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of the United Nations

October 14, 2004

Dear Constituent:

Thank you for contacting The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) regarding pet food nutrition studies being conducted by Iams. I am very pleased you wrote to me because it is imperative that I set the record straight regarding The HSUS and its relationship with Iams.

Let me start by pointing out that I have frequently acknowledged PETA's positive efforts on animal protection and publicly recognized the group's good works. I have, on rare occasions, been critical of some of its tactics, but only once in my memory ever voiced those concerns in a public way.

That being said, I must tell you that in this case PETA has terribly and unfairly misrepresented The HSUS's position.

The implication that The HSUS is attempting to preserve or secure any revenue from Iams is demonstrably false. When I took over as president of The HSUS earlier this year, I decided that we would not accept any money from Iams if the company continued any classical laboratory based testing of dogs. In short, The HSUS accepts zero dollars from Iams, we have no financial stake in defending Iams, and we base our dealings with the company entirely on our judgment about what is best for animals. No one should be under any illusion that we have a financial stake in protecting Iams.

Let me also mention that The HSUS has not endorsed Iams, its commercial products, or its testing practices. We had nothing to do with any design of any new facility at Iams, and this is a baseless charge by PETA. We have simply advocated for change, and, when warranted, credited the company when it has acted in a positive manner. We have been critical of the company's harmful practices, including its financial support of hunting organizations.

While PETA has pursued a highly confrontational approach to pressure Iams to move away from classical laboratory based experiments, The HSUS has pursued a different strategy. We have chosen dialogue as a means to move the company towards the goal of eliminating laboratory based animal testing. The combined impact of these approaches has produced good results.

Earlier this year, The HSUS asked the company to take the following six steps:

1. Move rapidly (no later than the end of the year) to end all laboratory animal testing that is conducted to satisfy nutritional adequacy statements for Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) labeling.
2. Make representations to the rest of the pet food industry to adopt the same approach to AAFCO labeling requirements.
3. Commit immediately to supporting the ultimate elimination of laboratory feeding studies with the greatest possible speed and energy.
4. Until laboratory animal tests are eliminated, Iams should take responsibility for the welfare of every dog and cat for the balance of his or her life. This means that every dog and cat should either be adopted out at the end of each study or retired to an appropriate domestic-style setting if the animal is determined to be unsuitable for adoption for behavior reasons. In other words, no dog or cat should be euthanized for reasons of human convenience or cost saving, nor warehoused in an institutional setting.
5. Commit to a policy of Zero Tolerance for any pain and distress that might result during a nutrition study and to engage in no studies that might employ techniques that would not be employed in a human out-patient clinic.
6. Commit to being a change agent for animal welfare improvements for all dogs and cats whether they are in homes or shelters and to be a leader in the industry on setting new standards for dog and cat welfare.

After we made these demands, Iams wrote back to The HSUS and agreed to adopt these reforms. The company immediately committed to end animal studies solely for AAFCO labeling requirements and has written to AAFCO stating its change in practice. Iams moved to adopt testing protocols no more invasive than those that human beings would undergo at any outpatient clinic. Iams also committed to ensuring the lifetime care in a home or home-equivalent environment of all the animals in their studies. In addition, the company declared its intention to be a leader in promoting the welfare of all dogs and cats especially those in shelters and other non-home environments and to the eventual elimination of animals in nutrition testing. We believe these commitments are significant, and we believe our role in having dialogue with the company helped catalyze these reforms – set against the backdrop of PETA’s more confrontational approach.

More recently, I wrote to and spoke with the president of Iams, telling him that it is imperative that the company eliminate any testing practices at contract facilities, university settings, or other outside facilities, as a means of moving Iams toward a testing system where the animals studied are companion animals volunteered by their caregivers and returned to their homes after the studies ended. If you remember, PETA severely criticized Iams for the mistreatment of dogs at a contract facility some time ago, so we

felt that this demand relating to outside testing facilities was very much in keeping with PETA's wishes, too. In response to our demand, Iams recently announced that it would terminate 70 percent of its testing practices within one year and all of its external work within two years.

It is worth noting that The HSUS has also moved beyond this specific case of Iams to place the question of reform before the entire pet food industry. We are asking that all the companies in this field adopt research and testing guidelines that phase out external contract-based research and move toward the elimination of any laboratory-based tests for pet food research. We intend to make a shift in industry practices a significant priority in the coming months.

The HSUS believes that animal testing, except in the home or in some other suitable setting (e.g., an animal shelter), cannot be justified simply for pet food production. Dr. Andrew Rowan, executive vice president for operations of The HSUS, currently serves on an international advisory board set up by Iams. He will remain on the advisory board only as long as The HSUS is satisfied that Iams is making good on its promises and honoring its commitments to improving animal welfare.

Our negotiations with Iams concerning the use and treatment of animals in pet food nutrition studies are in keeping with our established practice of engaging constructively with corporations and other institutions to effect change before resorting to protests and other confrontational approaches. If Iams continues talking with us and the company continues to move in a positive direction, we'll keep the dialogue going. In this case, we have sought to ensure that no animals experience discomfort, distress or pain as a result of Iams nutrition studies and that the company expedite its shift to non-invasive clinical testing protocols.

I cannot speak to the motivations for PETA's attack on The HSUS. You will have to talk to PETA's leaders about this. But it is undeniable that PETA has severely misrepresented our positions and actions on the Iams issue. We hope that PETA will cease these inaccurate, unwarranted attacks on The HSUS so we may all get back to the work of helping animals.

Thanks for writing me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Pacelle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne Pacelle  
President & CEO