

The HSUS Photo Ethics Policy

Effective April 2012

Photo editing and design are now more user-friendly than ever. This new technology has opened the door for photo manipulation and abuse that could undermine our supporters' trust in the authenticity of our photographs, jeopardizing the integrity and creditability of our organization's work on behalf of animals. To safeguard this trust, we've established a photo ethics policy with the following principles:

- **Stay True:** When taking photographs for The HSUS, be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of all subjects. Unless you are intentionally staging an image for a portrait, still life, or conceptual photo shoot, respect the integrity of the photographic moment; resist being manipulated by staged photo opportunities and do not intentionally alter or influence events. Strive to be unobtrusive and humble in dealing with subjects.
- **Acceptable Changes:** Photo editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context. Do not manipulate images in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects. Only the established norms of standard photo processing methods, listed below, are acceptable.
 - Color and exposure correction
 - Cropping and/or downsizing images for web
 - Removal of dust spots, scratches, or other technical camera defects
- **Discretionary Changes:** On a limited basis, adding gradients and/or content- or texture-free parts of an image (such as sky) to allow for rigid design spaces will be permitted, without discussion, on magazine covers, advertisements, website billboards, website banner images, and email mastheads. Since this is still a form of manipulation, it should be applied with discretion.
- **Prohibited Changes:** Any and all other image alterations, such as flipping and adding/removing elements from a photo, are not acceptable. If you believe you have good reason to do so, you must discuss it first with the HSUS Photo Ethics Committee*. The following points should be covered in the discussion before a decision is made.
 - What is the rationale for altering the photo?
 - What is the value of the altered photo to the story or project?
 - Are there ways to convey the information in the photo without altering it?
 - What are the possible consequences of publishing the altered photo? Would a reasonable person conclude that the alteration changes the meaning of the original photo?
 - Do we have all the information needed to make a final decision?
- **Photo Illustrations:** If a decision is made to alter a photo beyond the established norms listed above, it must be credited as a photo illustration. In addition, effort should be put forth to make the photo look like an obvious illustration so as not to deceive the reader.
- **Keep Wild Animals in the Wild:** When using wildlife images, make every effort to showcase those taken in the wild, not in zoos or captive game farms. Images of animals photographed in controlled situations should be captioned appropriately and not portrayed as being "in the wild." When purchasing a stock wildlife image, you are required to ask the agency to contact the individual photographer and verify that the animal was shot in the wild. If such verification cannot be obtained, you should not purchase the image. For more information about this, please refer to the Stock Photography Guide.

**The HSUS Photo Ethics committee is comprised of staff from across Communications who will be available to answer questions in a timely manner. Email photos@humansociety.org with questions and requests.*