

A German Shepherd dog is the central focus, sitting on a green lawn. The dog has a black and tan coat and is looking towards the camera with its mouth open and tongue hanging out. It is wearing a black tactical vest with multiple straps and buckles. A red circular patch is visible on the vest, featuring the American Humane logo. The background is slightly blurred, showing some green foliage and a wooden fence.

**AMERICAN★HUMANE**

*FIRST TO SERVE®*

**SPRING 2024  
NEWSLETTER**



# STRENGTHENING BONDS

Friends –

The arrival of Spring is a perfect time to look toward the future and envision a healthier, happier life for animals around the world.

We also want to take time to look back at the incredible and critical work American Humane has accomplished to save animal lives. Thanks to you, American Humane certified two Oscar Award Winning films, and is now serving on the board for the United States Roundtable for Sustainable Poultry and Egg (US-RSP&E). As Summer approaches, we also want to prepare for storm season, which could threaten our communities and the lives and habitats of our beloved animals. Because of your support, our rescue team is ready to deploy in times of disaster and I am so proud of their brave, essential work.

We ended 2023 with the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual American Humane Hero Dog Awards® hosted by Christie Brinkley and Carson Kressley, which aired on A&E and fyi, Network. During this incredible event, we celebrated America’s standout working dogs including Lieutenant K-9 Poppy, service and guide dog Moxie, therapy dog Maverick, military working dog K-9 Buda, and emerging hero and shelter dog Raina. We were thrilled to name Maverick, a six-year-old European Blue Great Dane and a United Service Organizations (USO) therapy dog, our American Humane Hero Dog winner. Stay tuned for updates on when nominations will open for the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Hero Dog Awards celebration, where we'll once again honor the heroes on both ends of the leash.

Keep reading as we dive deeper into our American Humane Hero Dog Awards, share exciting information about a new American Humane Sanctuary, and engage in a personal discussion with Josh Cary, American Humane’s National Director for Rescue. We will also tell heartwarming stories of reunifications between military working dogs and veterans, including U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant Mike and his K-9 companion John, and Joly, a German Shepherd, who traveled for 7,500 miles from the Middle East to the U.S. to be back with her former Master-at-Arms Brian.

I hope you enjoy our latest stories of compassion, hope and love. Please follow American Humane on social media for the latest breaking news and inspiring tales from our animal world. On behalf of each and every one of the beautiful creatures we help every day, thank you for your care and support!

Sincerely,



Robin R. Ganzert, Ph.D.  
President and CEO



# 13TH ANNUAL HERO DOG AWARDS



The 13th Annual American Humane Hero Dog Awards® was hosted by Christie Brinkley and Carson Kressley, and aired on A&E and fyi, Network.

The Hero Dog Awards is an annual, nationwide competition that recognizes America’s standout working dogs—often ordinary dogs who do extraordinary things—such as saving lives on the battlefield, lending sight or hearing to a human companion, or helping people achieve goals.

American Humane has celebrated these amazing canine heroes for 13 years, bringing to America stories of kindness, compassion, courage and unconditional love. This celebration was better than ever with heartwarming stories, heroic dogs and spectacular celebrities celebrating heroes on both ends of the leash!

Known as the “Oscars® for Canines,” the star-studded event was hosted by supermodel, actress, and entrepreneur Christie Brinkley and TV personality Carson Kressley. The glitzy gala, presented by Lois Pope and the Lois Pope LIFE Foundation, brought together celebrity animal lovers—including Nicollette Sheridan, Jennie Garth, Donna Mills, and more—to celebrate the five finalists, Lieutenant K-9 Poppy, service and guide dog Moxie, Therapy Dog Maverick, military working dog K-9 Buda, and emerging hero and shelter dog Raina.





Christie Brinkley expressed her enthusiasm, stating, “I’ve dedicated my life to championing the cause of animals, and it is with great privilege that I embrace the opportunity provided by the American Humane Hero Dog Awards telecast. This platform serves as an ideal nationwide stage to pay homage to these extraordinary canines and bestow upon them a voice for a single, remarkable evening.”

Americans nominated hundreds of inspiring dogs from across the country and selected five semi-finalists in each of the five categories. Then the American public voted for the favorite four-legged hero.

Dogs competed in five different categories:

- Law Enforcement and First Responder Dogs
- Service and Guide/Hearing Dogs
- Therapy Dogs
- Military Dogs
- Emerging Hero and Shelter Dogs

So, who took home the title of top dog? Maverick—a lifesaving therapy dog for the United Services Organization (USO)—was honored as the American Humane Hero Dog of the year.

Maverick is a six-year-old European Blue Great Dane and a USO therapy dog who brings comfort and solace to our nation’s military heroes and families. His unconditional love uplifts the spirits of the military community stationed at the Fort Leonard Wood Post base in Missouri, where he supports service members on suicide watch, escorts children to military funerals for family members, and helps men and women cope with trauma, injuries, and stress. When not supporting our troops, this 150-pound hero dog—who is a canine cancer survivor—offers snuggles and strength to his owner, Kelly Brownfield, in her own ongoing battle with cancer.

Over the past 13 years, Americans have cast millions of votes for more than a thousand dogs, all seeking the coveted title of American Humane Hero Dog. The program reaches billions of people each year and draws the support and participation of top celebrity dog lovers from all over the world.

Be on the lookout for information regarding nominations for the 14th Annual Hero Dog Awards and check with television/streaming providers on availability to watch the previous show. For more information about the American Humane Hero Dog Awards, visit [www.HeroDogAwards.org](http://www.HeroDogAwards.org).





# THE NEW AMERICAN HUMANE SANCTUARY



Our latest endeavor for the protection of animals is the new American Humane Sanctuary, known as the Ark of Hope. This will serve as a new humane home to iconic programs including:

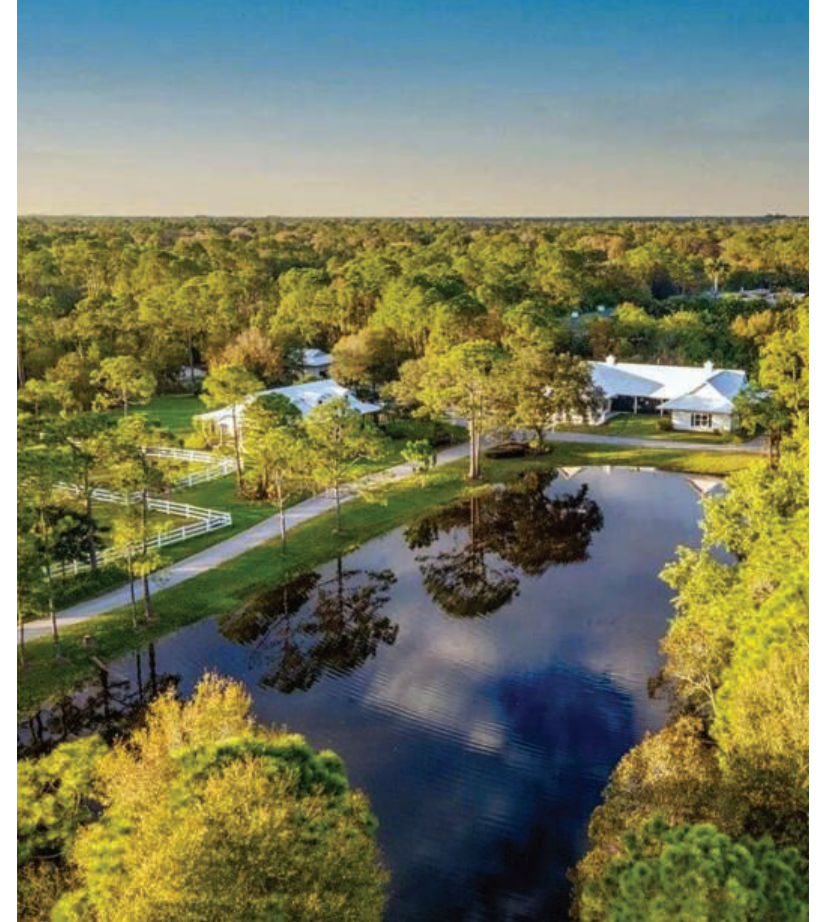
- Pups4Patriots Service Dogs: Service dogs will be trained on-site for wounded warriors, a program supported since its inception as part of the Lois Pope Center for Military Affairs. This site will serve to provide service dogs for wounded warriors here in Florida in our first residential training program.
- Animal Rescue: American Humane Rescue training programs will be conducted at the Ark to train first responders to deploy in rescue trucks for fires, floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters where animals are in harm's way. The rescue trucks will be on-site for tours and education.
- Children's Humane Education: Educational programs will feature a petting zoo and interactions with animals. Featured educational materials for the children include our award winning Be Kind to Animals® curriculum and Chicken Soup for the Soul® classroom teaching materials. Our curriculum won the 2020 Teacher's Award and celebrates our 118-year tradition of humane education.

The new Sanctuary includes exciting facilities that are under renovation, including:

- Huge Multi-Species Barn and Farm Paddocks: Rescue animals will be in a beautiful home in a multi-species farm setting with paddocks, pole barns, and huge multi-species barn, all serving as the humane home to animals in need. Animals will include dogs, cats, rabbits, cows, ducks, chickens, goats, and many more.
- Veterinary Triage Center: A triage center to provide first aid and critical care for animals will be built in the new multi-species barn.
- Betty White Healing Garden: Betty's life-sized bronzed sculpture will be featured at the entrance of the sanctuary, where the community visitors will be inspired by her long-standing commitment to animals.

This new sanctuary is a unique rescue center where animals and people alike can find hope, help, and healing. A place that can serve as a transformational model for the modern humane movement, providing lifesaving services for animals and an immersive experience for children and animal advocates that will showcase and support American Humane's crucial programs. It is a serene retreat for America's heroes where wounded veterans can begin a journey of healing as they are trained and paired with lifesaving service dogs. For years to come, animals, veterans and animal advocates will be able to enjoy this one-of-a-kind humane home.

We could not be more thrilled to finally see this vision come to life, and yet there is much needed to help ensure the future of our new Sanctuary.





# TOUCHING STORIES OF MILITARY WORKING DOGS



## MILITARY WORKING DOG JOHN AND U.S. AIR FORCE STAFF SERGEANT MIKE

American Humane reunited retired military working dog John with his former K-9 handler, U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant (SSgt.) Mike. The once-inseparable pair had been apart for over two years and are now together as John found his forever home to live out his retirement.

The 10-year-old German Shepherd served as an explosive-detection dog for eight years. He retired this month due to old age, ending a distinguished military career spent protecting civilians, his fellow service members, and high-profile VIPs, including American presidents, first ladies, foreign dignitaries, and more.

SSgt. Mike was John’s handler for three years, during which time the two formed an unbreakable bond. Mike and John were separated in September 2021 when SSgt. Mike was reassigned to another base. The moment he learned that John would retire, SSgt. Mike reached out to American Humane for help transporting his best friend home for adoption.

“When I found out that John was up for retirement, of course, I wanted him so bad,” said SSgt. Mike. “I heard about American Humane through a buddy of mine, so I thought I would reach out and see what American Humane could do for me and



John. They were gracious to help go pick him up in Hawaii, transport him back to me, and without me having to pay anything. It’s just been a blessing for us.”

In addition to transporting John from Hawaii to San Antonio, American Humane is also covering all of John’s veterinary care for the rest of his life. During the emotional reunion, SSgt. Mike and his wife, Brittany, introduced their 10-month-old daughter to John—the newest member of the family.







## MILITARY WORKING DOG JOLY AND MASTER-AT-ARMS BRIAN

American Humane also had the pleasure of celebrating MWD Joly, the valiant German Shepherd, who completed her 7,500-mile journey from the Middle East to the United States ahead of her magical reunion with Master-at-Arms Brian.

Joly's service, marked by bravery and dedication, created an inseparable bond with Brian and when it was time for her retirement, Brian knew he had to bring his loyal companion home. American Humane stepped in to make this dream a reality, ensuring Joly's safe passage to a life of comfort and joy in her forever home.

The arrival of Joly marked not just a reunion but the beginning of a peaceful retirement. Her transition from service to a loving home environment serves as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by both our two-legged and four-legged heroes.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM HOLLYWOOD: ACADEMY AWARDS AND GOLDEN GLOBE WINNERS 2024



American Humane is no stranger to Hollywood's award season. From The Golden Globes® to The SAG Awards®, to the queen of them all, The Academy Awards®, American Humane has certified countless award-winning movies and TV shows for decades now. Standouts include 2011's Best Picture, *The Artist*, which featured one of our favorite animal actors, Uggie, and last year's *Everything, Everywhere All at Once*, which swept the evening with seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Our presence was definitely felt at The Golden Globes® where we certified most of the nominated television episodes, streaming series, and movies. We also certified a lot of the winners! In fact, our end credit can be found in episodes of Golden Globe winners like *Beef* and *Succession*. We certified movies that took home the Golden Globe this year like *Barbie*, *Killers of the Flower Moon* and *Poor Things*.

As for Hollywood's biggest night, The 96th Academy Awards®, American Humane is proud that we protected the animals and certified most of the nominees this year. Below is a list of this year's Oscar nominated films, in various categories, which have our end credit! As for American Humane, we'd like to thank the Academy and Hollywood in working with us and helping us protect all those amazing four-legged actors in Hollywood's best!

American Humane Certified (various categories):  
*Poor Things*, *Barbie*, *Maestro*, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*, *Guardians of the Galaxy 3*, *Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning, Part One*, *Nyad*, and *The Color Purple*.





# INTERVIEW WITH JOSH CARY, AMERICAN HUMANE’S NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF RESCUE



## Tell me about one rescue that really impacted you?

Each response impacts me in some way, even after 65+ responses over 14 years. I’m always blown away by our responders and their ability to drop what they’re doing and come help us care for all the animals in a safe and organized way. My heart goes out to the communities impacted by disasters, so being able to work with them to help pick up the pieces is very rewarding and I’m honored to help.

Some rescues impacted me more because of how difficult the response was and/or how bad the community and animals were impacted, such as, The Joplin, MO tornado; Campfire Paradise, CA; Hurricane Dorian; Abaco Island, Bahama; Hurricane Ida; and Terrebonne Parish. Others left an impression due to the animals, like the Mt. Home, AK Horse Rescue, where 115 horses were saved, as well as Wolf Hybrid, a very challenging case where we got to work with some amazing animals. Some moments were a first for me, including the Memphis, TN floods in 2011, which was my first natural disaster with American Humane.

## What does it mean to be the Director of Rescue Operations for American Humane?

To be the steward of the Rescue program is very humbling. To run such a historic and impactful program, see the program into the future, help communities better prepare for disasters, and assist more people while keeping staff, responders, and animals safe is an honor and a challenge.

## What potential emergencies are you preparing for this year?

We are preparing for an above average active hurricane season with El Nino forecasted to give way to La Nina patterns that are historically more favorable to developing tropical systems. This is definitely a year to be prepared, especially in hurricane-prone states.

## Do you have any disaster tips to share?

If you don’t have an emergency/disaster preparedness kit for you, your family and pets, start one, and have a plan for sheltering in place and evacuating. If you have a disaster kit and plan, go through it with your family so everyone knows what to do. Be weather wise, know what’s in the forecast for your area, heed warnings from local emergency managers, and always bring your pets if you evacuate.

## Is there anything else you’d like our American Humane community to know?

It’s better to be prepared than to react, whether it’s you, your family, or as an organization. If you’re prepared, then you can help out your community or a neighboring community when disaster strikes.





# DISASTER PREP KIT

When disaster strikes, it is crucial that individuals and families stay safe – and that includes pets. By having a plan and practicing it, communities can be prepared to act at a moment's notice should a major storm arrive.

Here is our checklist to prepare an emergency kit that will help protect pets when disaster strikes.

## BEFORE THE STORM

- Microchip pets or put a tag on their collar with a name, address, and cell phone number so they may be returned quickly in case you are separated from your pets. Be sure that any microchip information is up to date.
- Tie down or anchor outside objects that might fly about and injure someone.
- Have a plan already established on which family member is responsible for the pet's needs (who will grab the pet, the food, medications, water, disaster preparedness kit, carrier, etc.).
- Know a safe place where pets can go if you need to evacuate or seek shelter. Evacuation destinations may include a friend or family member's home, going to a pet-friendly hotel, or temporarily housing pet(s) at a boarding facility. Plan multiple routes to a safe destination. Review your evacuation plan and double-check emergency supplies – including, medications, bowls, water, and food.
- Evacuate your family and pets as early as possible and remember to take a disaster preparedness kit for pets (i.e. First Aid kit, leashes, and pets' carrying cases, bowls, sanitation materials, medications, chew toy, minimum 3 days, ideally 7-10 days of food, meds, water, veterinarian's contact information, and a photo of your pet).

- Bring outdoor animals inside with a carrier large enough for them to turn around and lie down comfortably.
- Have a carrier ready. Portable carriers(s) should be ready to go at a moment's notice. Practice loading cats and dogs into pet carriers before you have to.
- If your family must evacuate, take your pets with you.

## DURING THE STORM (If You Cannot Evacuate)

- Choose a safe room for riding out the storm—an interior room without windows—and take your entire family there, including your pets.
- Stay with pets. If crated, they depend on you for food and water. Don't leave pets in vehicles.
- Keep your emergency kit in that room with you (food, water, medications, litter, meds, etc).
- Know your pet's hiding places. That's where they may run, so make sure to keep them with you.
- Secure exits and cat doors so pets can't escape into the storm.
- Do not tranquilize your pets. They'll need their survival instincts, should the storm require that.

## AFTER THE STORM

- Make sure the storm has fully passed before going outside and assess damages before allowing children or animals out.
- Keep dogs on a leash and cats in a carrier, and children close at hand. Displaced objects, downed power lines, and fallen trees can disorient or injure pets, and sharp debris could harm them as well.



- Give pets time to become re-oriented. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and cause a pet to become confused or lost. Familiar bedding will often help alleviate some of the stress related to being displaced.
- Keep animals away from sitting water that may be contaminated.
- Uncertainty and change in the environment affect animals, too, presenting new stresses and dangers. Your pet's behavior may change after a crisis, becoming more aggressive or self-protective. Be sensitive to these changes and keep more room between them, other animals, children, or strangers. Animals need comforting, too. Comfort your pet with kind words and lots of pats or hugs. If possible, provide a safe and quiet environment, even if it is not their own home.
- Two week supply of water
- Food and water dishes
- Two week supply of medications and necessary medication instructions
- Documentation
  - Veterinary records (vaccinations, medical summary, rabies certificate/tag, medication prescriptions)
  - Registration information (proof of ownership or adoption records)
  - Microchip information
  - Recent photographs of each pet
  - Waterproof container for documents
- Supplies
  - Collar with contact information
  - Harness and/or leash
  - Pet first aid kit
  - Pet carrier and pet bedding
  - Familiar items (treats and toys to reduce stress)
  - Cleaning supplies
  - Litter-box and litter (cats)
  - Rescue alert sticker

## ITEMIZED CHECKLIST

- Water, food and medications
  - Two week supply of food in cans or a waterproof, airtight container
  - Feeding instructions for each animal



# ZOETIS AND AMERICAN HUMANE PET WELLNESS CLINIC



As part of American Humane’s partnership with Zoetis, a world leader in animal health, we hosted a pet wellness clinic. Pet parents brought cats and dogs to American Humane’s mobile clinic where veterinarians provided rabies vaccinations, species-specific combo vaccinations, flea and tick treatments, and microchipping, free of charge.

Pet parents attending the clinic also received Pet Preparedness Kits, providing essential supplies to have at the ready in case of an emergency. However, natural disasters are not the only thing posing a risk to pets. Across the country, many families struggle day-to-day to access basic veterinary care for pets. Limited resources, transportation challenges, and veterinary staffing issues have created barriers to essential services like vaccinations and preventative care.

The aim of the Wellness Clinic was to meet these challenges head on, empowering pet parents with the tools and resources needed to safeguard the health and wellbeing of these cherished companions.

Over 250 pets were served, and this clinic serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of compassion and collaboration. One pet parent shared that the clinic “means the world to her” given the high cost of veterinary service. Another pet parent told the story of her family’s new dog, Snowball, that they rescued after he was found as a stray in her neighborhood. They were grateful to be able to give Snowball a forever home and the care he needs.

We want to extend our immense gratitude to the entire Zoetis team for providing the needed medication and supplies for this event and helping us provide free care to pets in need.





November 5, 2023

# How to Ensure Fewer Species Follow Dinosaurs to Extinction

By: Robin Ganzert, Ph.D. and Theo B. Pagel

The U.S. government announced last month that nearly two dozen species are being taken off the endangered species list — sadly, because they have fallen prey to extinction. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams noted that federal protections for the group simply came too late. The development confirms the magnitude of the crisis the world is facing.

The next generation of conservationists needs to be inspired to step up to the plate.

Scientists believe the planet is in the midst of the sixth mass extinction. And unlike the previous five periods, this one is primarily driven by human activity. Why? Largely because our unsustainable land and water use is slowly destroying natural habitats.

Scientists estimate that species are now disappearing at a rate that is 1,000 to 10,000 times quicker than what would be unfolding if humanity were not a factor. More specifically, new research suggests that of the more than 150,000 species monitored by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, nearly half are experiencing shrinking populations.

It is not difficult to imagine why species around the world are facing a crisis.

From the destruction of natural habits in the name of development to industrial runoff in the name of production to deforestation in the name of agriculture, human actions are squeezing plants, animals and insects into a smaller and smaller space. Not only are these shrinking areas struggling to sustain current population sizes, but species are thrust into unnatural environments where they are pushing against thousands of years of evolution.

Fortunately, while humans have been the driving force of the problem, we can also become a part of the solution.

Recently announced support from the federal government to help preserve roughly 7,200 acres of habitat and protect more than 60 species that are at risk of extinction is a good step. The move will help bolster significant progress that has been achieved under the country’s preeminent conservation statute: The Endangered Species Act. Enacted in 1973, it is estimated the legislation has helped save nearly 300 species in the U.S. — making huge inroads to preserve the country’s natural beauty for the next generation.

Yet, these are only two pieces to the puzzle. To help supplement these resources, we need to cultivate the next generation of conservation champions.

Today’s youth are less likely to fall in love with nature by virtually visiting exotic places or seeing animals through their phone or tablet screens. They need to be able to experience the impressive stature of an elephant or the curiosity of a sea otter firsthand. No institution or education campaign can do this better than responsibly run zoos, aquariums and wildlife tourism operations.

These encounters can create an emotional connection with nature that can fuel our fight against extinction. After all, you are unlikely to protect what you do not love, and you cannot love what you do not know.

While some in the animal rights movement seek to eliminate human-animal interaction, modern zoos, aquariums and humane tourism excursions that serve this important conservation purpose still need our support to play a role in preserving biodiversity.

Many of these facilities are also part of a larger global movement that complements the emotional connections zoos and aquariums nurture between visitors and animals. One such campaign, called Reverse the Red, aims to more broadly ignite cooperation and drive concrete action to help ensure the survival of wild species and ecosystems.

The world is racing against the clock to beat back the sixth mass extinction. American policymakers ranging from local city councils to the federal government need to do their part in the fight. Financial support is important but cultivating the next generation of people who can leverage those resources to create effective change is critical.

By working together, we can ensure that fewer species will go the way of the dinosaur.

*Robin Ganzert, Ph.D., is the CEO of American Humane, the country’s first national humane organization, and is the author of “Mission Metamorphosis: Leadership for a Humane World.”*

*Theo B. Pagel is the CEO of the Cologne Zoo and the recipient of the 2023 Wolfgang Kiessling International Prize for Species Conservation.*





## Wagging war: Congress must pass bill to prioritize working dogs

By: Robin Ganzert

Sadly, the world is headed in the wrong direction as conflict erupts overseas. With so many geopolitical fires burning overseas, it's increasingly likely that the U.S. will be pulled into direct military action. While I hope I am wrong—and am holding out for the possibility of peace—we must prepare.

Well-trained animals can provide one piece to the puzzle. We need to prime the country's four-legged heroes.

On the battlefield and in supporting operations, working dogs can do extraordinary things. With a sense of smell that can be up to 100,000 times more acute than a human's, the military deploys hundreds of pups to theaters of war to detect bombs, help in search and rescue operations and take down targets. In fact, dogs began appearing on U.S. battlefields during the Revolutionary War and officially joined the military ranks amid World War II.

In one amazing instance from Operation Enduring Freedom, military dog Bronco took a bullet while saving his handler, Staff Sgt. John Mariana, from an enemy combatant firing an automatic rifle at them from just 10 feet away. It is incredible stories like this that have played out time and time again—saving tens of thousands of lives. Fortunately, Bronco survived and returned home—just how all four-legged veterans should be reunited with their handlers in retirement.

Meanwhile, their counterparts at government agencies help provide cover on the home front—where threat levels are rising.

Highly trained K-9 units with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) can detect 19,000 different combinations of explosives—a talent that is used to foil terrorist plots at populated venues like concert halls or sports stadiums. And dogs under the umbrella of the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) help to patrol airports.

Given chaos around the world, these four-legged heroes need to be prepped for success. That is why my organization, American Humane, is pushing legislation in Congress that

represents a strong step towards prioritizing the well-being of working animals.

Called the Working Dog Health and Welfare Act, the bill would help ensure that government agencies implement Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations that promote the health and welfare of working dogs operating alongside human partners. The legislation was voted out of committee in October and should swiftly be considered for a floor vote.

Beyond immediate readiness, if our men and women in uniform do begin to play a more direct role in conflicts unfolding abroad, we need to be prepared to mitigate the fallout down the road. And man's best friend can play a critical function here as well.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, seven percent of our military heroes come home and experience Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) at some point in their lives — sadly leading some to take their own lives. Well-trained service dogs provide healing power.

A growing body of research is uncovering how a wagging tail can be a valuable medicine for veterans struggling with the invisible wounds of war. Service dogs can be trained to identify and interrupt the flashbacks associated with PTS by barking, licking, or sitting on or next to veterans. They can even learn to anticipate the episode and stop it before it begins.

Ramping up training programs for these service dogs should be a priority. And considering the process costs upwards of \$30,000 per animal, initiatives like American Humane's Pups4Patriots program need to be put in high gear to help provide even more veterans with lifesaving companions free of charge.

The world is tilting in a dangerous direction. We need to prime the country's four-legged heroes, and recognize the efforts of man's best friend.

*Robin Ganzert, Ph.D., a Palm Beach resident, is president and CEO of American Humane. She is the author of "Mission Metamorphosis: Leadership for a Humane World."*

## On Veterans Day, Let's Recommit to Healing Invisible Wounds of War With the Help of a Wagging Tail

By: Amy Hrin & Mel Coleman

As Americans observe Veterans Day this year, it's important to be mindful of the challenges facing former military members. The wounds of war—both seen and unseen—should be top of mind. Beyond simply recognizing the struggles, we should also recommit ourselves to doing something about it. And for returning military heroes facing the invisible scars of battle—notably Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury—a valuable medicine is often four legs and a wagging tail.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, seven percent of former U.S. service members experience Post-Traumatic Stress at some point in their lives. Alarmingly, that figure balloons to up to nearly one-third of veterans who served during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Combat isn't the only cause. The condition can arise from other service-related trauma, including training accidents, military sexual trauma, and natural disasters.

Left unaddressed, these types of mental health conditions can lead to the unthinkable. In a particularly sobering fact, more veterans have died from suicide than from combat since September 11, 2001. In the face of this alarming crisis, service dogs have emerged as a beacon of hope.

We're no strangers to the value that dogs can provide on the battlefield. The military deploys hundreds of pups to theaters of war to detect bombs, help in search and rescue operations, and track enemy combatants.

But beyond aiding U.S. and allied military operations directly, a growing body of research now supports something that we've all suspected to be true: service dogs can play an essential role in helping our veterans recover once they've returned from the battlefield. In addition to providing companionship and support, these remarkable animals are extensively trained to perform specific tasks tailored to their handler's individual needs.

For example, veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress often experience intense flashbacks, which can trigger emotional and physical reactions such as panic attacks, uncontrollable shaking, and heart palpitations. Service dogs can be trained to identify and then interrupt these flashbacks by barking, licking, or sitting on or next to the veteran. They can even learn to anticipate an oncoming flashback or panic attack by detecting signs like increased heart rate—stopping an episode before it even begins.

Caring for a service dog can also provide veterans a sense of purpose and accomplishment, both of which reduce symptoms of depression. Dogs facilitate social interaction for individuals who might otherwise feel isolated, and even just taking a dog for a walk can help improve mood as well as foster a clarifying sense of structure for dog owners.

That's why American Humane operates a program called Pups4Patriots. The initiative finds dogs in search of forever homes and trains them to be lifesaving service animals for veterans suffering from the aftershocks of military service—all free of charge thanks to program sponsors. Without this help, getting a well-trained service dog can cost veterans upwards of \$30,000—a process that can take months or even years.

But we can't do it alone. Fortunately, outside of private efforts, there is a growing coalition of policymakers in Washington that are recognizing the unique benefits that service dogs can provide to veterans.

In 2021, Congress passed—and President Biden signed into law—the Puppies Assisting Wounded Service Members (PAWS) for Veterans Therapy Act. The legislation gives veterans struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress the opportunity to take advantage of a service dog referral program and launch a pilot initiative to train more animals.

And earlier this year, a bill was introduced to build off this progress. Called the Service Dogs Assisting Veterans (SAVES) Act, the bipartisan legislation would establish a grant program to help fund private groups that train and pair former service members with service dogs.

As we honor our veterans, let's recommit ourselves to sending those who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress or Traumatic Brain Injury some four-legged reinforcements. By supporting a mix of federal legislation, patriotic nonprofits, and the love of a good dog, we can help ensure veterans struggling with mental health issues don't walk alone and will always have a furry best friend by their side.

*Amy Hrin is the Vice President of the Lois Pope Life Foundation for Military Affairs at American Humane. Mel Coleman is the Co-Founder of Coleman Natural Foods, which supports American Humane's Pups4Patriots program.*



## Opinion: U.S. Should Not Follow Mexico in Limiting Efforts to Breed Threatened Marine Mammals

*By: Kashyap Choksi*

Some around the world are trying to end the practice of marine mammals living in human care. The latest offensive is unfolding in Mexico where the legislature is considering prohibiting attractions that feature animals like dolphins, manatees, and sea lions at aquariums and other parks. The move would also ban allowing animals to engage in the natural behavior of breeding.

The proposal should be a cautionary tale for lawmakers in the U.S. And those south of the border should rethink their strategy.

Although the hearts of supporters may be in the right place, the plan is misguided. The approach will backfire on the conservation efforts responsible for preserving the very species these types of policies are intended to help. Radical animal liberation groups pushing to ban animals in human care clearly do not understand the broader movement aimed at preserving biodiversity and prioritizing the wellbeing of animals.

Modern zoos and aquariums help to facilitate and promote critical conservation efforts that governments and other private actors fail to accomplish on their own. These types of responsibly run institutions are vessels that safely house and help to sustain animals who face huge hurdles in the wild related to the sixth mass extinction.

The mass casualty event is sweeping across the planet — threatening species ranging from small insects to majestic creatures of the deep. Scientists estimate that species are now disappearing at a rate that is 1,000- to 10,000-times quicker than natural rates of extinction. It is going to take an all-hands-on-deck approach to prevent a disastrous outcome for the planet and the species who inhabit it.

Marine parks are on the frontline of this war. And handicapping them by levying severe restrictions on breeding programs and other operations would compromise their ability

to help bolster populations. Not only are zoos and aquariums a haven from human-driven ecosystem destruction, but they conduct critical research to better understand animal behavior and protect animals in the wild.

The next generation of conservation champions that we are counting on to continue the fight into the future is also on the chopping block.

Hundreds of millions of people — notably children — visit zoos, aquariums, and other parks every year. And when they have the opportunity to visit with animals — whether that be engaging with a manatee or meeting a sea otter — an emotional connection with nature is made that can fuel a lifetime of wildlife and environmental advocacy. After all, you cannot protect what you do not love, and you cannot love what you do not know.

The happiness and health of the animals themselves would also be threatened under Mexico’s proposal — specifically the breeding prohibition.

Dolphins, for example, are social mammals that develop and learn through complex play. In this way, reproduction is not only a normal behavior but yields offspring who enrich the socialization of the dolphin community. Restricting the animals from normal reproductive practices — and subsequent interaction with their offspring — would be detrimental to their physical, social, and cognitive well-being.

The legislation being considered in Mexico is counterproductive. Marine parks have a critical role to play in the conservation movement and their hands should not be tied behind their backs. Mexico policymakers should think twice before implementing the proposal and the U.S. should avoid following in their footsteps.

*Kashyap Choksi is the chief operating officer of American Humane, the country’s first national humane organization.*

## U.S. Senate Paves Path to Improving Welfare for Four-Legged Heroes

*By: Robin Ganzert*

The U.S. Senate recently passed its first bill of 2024—and, refreshingly, it was in bipartisan fashion. The Working Dog Health and Welfare Act rightfully attracted unanimous support and now moves to the House for consideration. Lawmakers in the lower chamber should swiftly pass the bill and President Biden should affix his signature.

It is a win-win for American security and animal welfare.

The legislation would establish comprehensive processes aimed at detecting abuse and neglect towards the more than 5,000 dogs working in the federal government. The four-legged heroes are active within 64 programs that span eight departments and a handful of independent agencies. Common duties include explosives detection, uncovering narcotics, finding missing persons, and safety patrols, among other distinct responsibilities.

The bill would also ensure these animals receive emergency medical care when needed and are given a proper regimen of exercise, food, water, and rest when on the job. And to the relief of out-of-service working dog owners, the canines would enjoy a healthy retirement with medical needs being taken care of.

The congressional action stems from a 2022 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report appropriately titled, “Working Dogs: Federal Agencies Need to Better Address Health and Welfare.” The investigation uncovered glaring holes when it came to 18 issue areas identified as important to animal health and safety. Disturbingly, according to the government watchdog, “about half of the federally managed and contractor-managed agency programs [didn’t] address abuse or neglect.”

It is past time that we treat four-legged heroes with the respect they deserve; congressional action is well-warranted. Dogs have a long and storied history of promoting safety on the home front as well as securing American freedoms abroad.

Dating back to the American Revolution, canines have played critical roles in combat—officially joining the military ranks in World War II. In 1943, one German shepherd-collie-

husky mix named Chips was even awarded the Silver Star, the military’s third-highest medal for bravery. Serving for more than three years on multiple continents, Chips helped to save pinned-down U.S. forces in Italy and forced the surrender of numerous enemy soldiers.

Similar stories of four-legged bravery on behalf of America have been on full display in nearly every major U.S. conflict. During the Korean War, dogs performed night patrols to help ambush enemy positions. In Vietnam, canines helped to detect Viet Cong traps amid the dense jungle. And more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan, military dogs’ keen sense of smell helped to identify IEDs.

Their heroism is something we should aspire to and honor. That is why my organization, American Humane, helps to reunite retired military dogs with their veteran handlers. For example, we recently reunified retired military dog John and his former handler, U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant Mike Alcala. Rekindling these relationships help provide joy on both ends of the leash.

Today, highly-trained canines continue to play an integral role in protecting Americans from backyard threats—both from nefarious actors and Mother Nature.

Working dogs at the Federal Bureau of Investigation can detect 19,000 different combinations of explosives—a talent that is used to foil terrorist plots at mass gatherings like concerts or sporting events. Search and rescue animals help find people who are lost or trapped following natural disasters. And dogs working with the Transportation Safety Administration patrol the country’s airports.

Senate passage of the Working Dog Health and Welfare Act is a good step towards improving the lives of animals who help keep Americans safe every day. Policymakers in the House should quickly approve the legislation. The country’s four-legged heroes deserve it.

*Robin Ganzert is the president and CEO of American Humane, the country’s first national humane organization. She is the author of “Mission Metamorphosis: Leadership for a Humane World.”*



# EXCITING NEW CERTIFICATIONS



Our Humane Conservation team remains hard at work certifying the welfare and humane treatment of animals in zoological facilities around the world. American Humane’s rigorous certification program provides visitors with a way to recognize the best zoos, aquariums, and animal parks around the world.

To be recognized as Humane Certified™, these sites must first pass a rigorous independent assessment that reviews the wellbeing of animals and demonstrated overall excellence in animal care and welfare practices. The unique process is guided by the latest science and best practices and is informed by a Scientific Advisory Committee comprised of respected veterinarians and experts in the fields of animal welfare, animal science, zoology, and ethics with decades of experience.

The following facilities have recently achieved American Humane Certification:

- **ABQ BioPark** in Albuquerque, New Mexico is a vibrant aquarium, zoo, botanical garden, and public park. The mission of the BioPark is to foster meaningful connections between people and nature.
- **Atlantis Paradise Island** is an oceanside resort located on Paradise Island in The Bahamas. Atlantis has committed to a meaningful connection with the ocean, marine life, sustainability, and environmental stewardship through its purpose-led efforts with Dolphin Cay and the Atlantis Blue Project Foundation (ABPF).
- **Cabo Adventures** is a provider of outdoor experiences and adventures in the Cabo San Lucas region, dedicated to offering visitors a deeper connection with nature and culture through a range of exciting activities and tours. Tierra Sagrada by Cabo Adventures represents a commitment to preserving and sharing the natural wonders of Baja California Sur.
- Home to more than 10,000 animals representing over 600 species worldwide, the **Columbus Zoo and Aquarium** leads by making a positive impact on people, wildlife and wild places. The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium also manages The Wilds, a 10,000-acre conservation center and safari park located in southeastern Ohio. The Columbus Zoo is a wildlife conservation organization with regional, national, and global impacts.





- **Poema del Mar**, an aquarium located in Spain’s Canary Islands, is an authentic marine life conservation center that is home to more than 25,000 animals of more than 500 species. In addition, Poema del Mar represents the maximum commitment to biodiversity, respect for species, and a commitment to the preservation of natural environments.

In addition to our Humane Certified program for zoos and aquariums, American Humane also established the Global Humane Tourism™ certification program to assess and certify wildlife reserves, lodges, and tour operators for humane responsibility toward the animal life that the operations may encounter and have the potential to impact.

We are pleased to announce the Humane Tourism certification of one new wildlife tour operator:

- **Raggy Charters Marine-Eco Cruises** is a boat-based Whale and Dolphin Watching tour in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Raggy Charters offers tours of Algoa Bay, also known as the Bottlenose Dolphin Capital of the World, and funds generated from whale watching boat cruises, African penguin boat cruises, and other marine eco-tours are directed towards funding the Algoa Baywatch Project.



# DID YOU KNOW? (SOME SERIOUS, SOME LIGHT FACTS ABOUT ANIMALS)



1. *Dogs can be right or left pawed.*
2. *A group of cats is called a “clowder.”*
3. *The most endangered animal of 2023 was the Javan Rhino now only found on the island of Java, Indonesia, with a population of around 60 individuals.*
4. *Dogs get jealous when they see their owners display affection for another creature.*
5. *Orangutans love the taste of soap.*
6. *Habitat loss is the primary cause of higher extinction rates.*





## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR ANIMALS IN NEED

Help American Humane continue our life-changing work for innocent animals everywhere. Your support will make a lasting impact and will help ensure we always remain *First to Serve*® animals in need.

To make your gift today and learn how you can create a legacy of compassion, visit us online at [americanhumane.org/get-involved](https://americanhumane.org/get-involved), by phone at (800) 227-4645, or via mail at 1400 16th Street NW, Suite 360, Washington, DC 20036.



American Humane is the only national humane organization with top ratings and endorsements from the key charity watchdog groups. American Humane has earned **Charity Navigator's** highest **"Four-Star Rating"**, has earned the **platinum level seal** from **GuideStar USA**, and is one of the few charities that meet all of the **Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance's 20 Standards for Charity Accountability**.



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