

Animal Tracker – Year 5

An HRC-Managed Research Study, April 2012



Report in Brief

This report summarizes results from Year 5 of the *Animal Tracker* annual survey of U.S. adults regarding attitudes and behavior toward animals. The first survey (Year 1, 2008) included 16 questions; five of these questions were asked again in 2009 (Year 2) and in the current year (Year 5, 2012). In summary, the most recent survey finds that, while there is generally a high level of support for the animal protection movement and concern for animals in various situations, this concern declined slightly over time. U.S. adults are also devoting less attention to animal protection issues than in previous years, and are more likely to feel that the current legal protections for animals are “adequate.”

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HRC Information

The Humane Research Council is a nonprofit organization dedicated to maximizing the effectiveness of animal advocates by applying professional, cost-efficient, and informative consumer and market research methods.

To learn more about HRC, please contact us:

By phone: (206) 905-9887

By e-mail: info@humanereseach.org

Online: <http://www.humanereseach.org>

By post: Post Office Box 6476

Olympia, WA 98507-6476



Year 5 Results in Brief

- ❖ There is a high level of support for the animal protection movement. The animal protection and workers' rights movements were rated favorably by more respondents than any other social movements listed in the survey, each receiving a "favorable" opinion by 68% of respondents. Further, only 7% of respondents rated their opinion of the animal protection movement as "unfavorable."
- ❖ There is a lack of discussion and knowledge of animal protection issues among U.S. adults, indicating a need to educate the general population about animal protection issues. Fewer than half (45%) of U.S. adults discussed animal protection on at least a monthly basis.
- ❖ At least one-quarter of respondents indicated not knowing or having an opinion about the adequacy of animal protection laws in various situations.
- ❖ People are *most* likely to find veterinarians credible on issues of animal welfare and animal protection, and *least* likely to find attorneys, businesses or corporations credible sources of information. The credibility of animal protection groups falls in between. This highlights the potential utility of including veterinarians in animal protection outreach efforts.
- ❖ The amount of importance placed on the protection and welfare of animals in various situations has declined in 2012 compared to 2009. Even so, the welfare of animals is still important to a majority of U.S. adults. At least 75% of respondents rated the welfare and protection of animals as "very" or "somewhat" important in all situations addressed in this survey. This even includes situations in which animals are used for economic benefit, such as animals used for food and horses and dogs used for racing.

Summary Results by Topic (Year 5 Only)

- ❖ **Favorability (Q1) – What is your opinion of each of the following social causes or political movements?** Respondents were asked about a number of social causes and political movements. They were asked if their opinion of each was favorable, unfavorable, or if they had no opinion. Animal protection and workers' rights received the most favorable ratings among all of the causes, with 68% of respondents indicating a favorable opinion of each. Only 7% of respondents found the animal protection movement "unfavorable." Tax reform and relief was close behind, with 66% of respondents indicating a favorable opinion. Gay and lesbian rights and pro-life/anti-abortion causes received the least favorable rating, with 27% and 33% indicating an *unfavorable* opinion of each, respectively.
- ❖ **Credibility (Q2) – How much credibility do you give each of the following sources when it comes to information about animal welfare?** Respondents were asked how much credibility they give to a variety of professions when it comes to information about animal welfare. Most respondents (82%) indicated that veterinarians were either "significantly" (50%) or "moderately" (32%) credible. Seventy-one percent of people thought that family and friends were significantly or moderately credible, followed by farmers and ranchers (67%), scientists and researchers (66%), and animal protection groups (65%).

It is noteworthy that animal protection groups are on par with scientists and ranchers in terms of credibility, as it is often the claims of these groups that animal protection groups are challenging. However, it is also important to note that, while there are similar levels of credibility attributed to these three groups, more respondents think that animal groups have “very little or “no” credibility when compared to scientists (29% vs. 26%) and ranchers and farmers (29% vs. 25%). Most people attribute very little or no credibility to businesses and corporations (66%), attorneys (65%), or the federal government (55%) in relation to information about animal welfare.

❖ **Awareness (Q7) – In the past three months, how often have you talked about or heard someone talking about animal protection, including animal rights and/or animal welfare?**

Although animal protection issues are on the radar of most people, it is not a regular topic of discussion. Most people note that animal rights and welfare are either an occasional (36%) or rare (29%) topic of conversation, while about a quarter (26%) of respondents note that they did not hear animal rights or welfare issues discussed at all in the past three months. Only 9% of respondents said that animal welfare topics were discussed on a daily or near daily basis. Considering that most people have daily contact with animals or issues impacting animals, the low proportion of U.S. adults discussing animal issues on a frequent basis is noteworthy.

❖ **Animal Welfare Importance by Situation (Q9) – How important to you is the welfare and protection of animals in each of the following situations?** The level of importance placed on animals in different situations was generally high, though it varied predictably in that animals used for economic benefit were generally attributed less importance. Over four-fifths of respondents said that the welfare and protections of animals was “very important” or “somewhat important” in the following situations: animals in pounds or shelters (85%), endangered species (85%), animals in zoos and aquariums (84%), and animals kept as companion animals (83%). No more than 5% of respondents said that animals in any situation were “not at all important.”

❖ **Current laws (Q13) – Do you think that laws protecting animals from inhumane treatment are adequate or inadequate for each of the following kinds of animals?** Generally, respondents indicated that they feel laws protecting animals are adequate in most situations. Over half of respondents thought that laws protecting pets/companion animals (56%) and animals in zoos and aquariums (52%) were adequate. Notably, three of the four situations in which respondents were most likely to note the protection of animals was “very” important in the previous question (Q7) were the situations in which respondents were most likely to indicate they thought laws to protect animal welfare were adequate. These situations include animals kept as companions/pets, animals in zoos and aquariums, and animals in pounds and shelters.

Respondents were least likely to think that laws protecting animals in laboratories and animals raised for food are adequate—with 38% and 36%, respectively, indicating laws protecting animals in these situations were “not adequate.” Importantly, there was a general lack of knowledge about the subject of legal protections for animals. At least one-quarter of respondents indicated for each situation addressed in the survey that they did not know whether or not laws protecting animals were adequate. There was the least amount of knowledge about the adequacy of laws protecting animals in circuses and rodeos, animals in laboratories, and horses and dogs used for racing.

Changes from Previous Years (2008 & 2009)

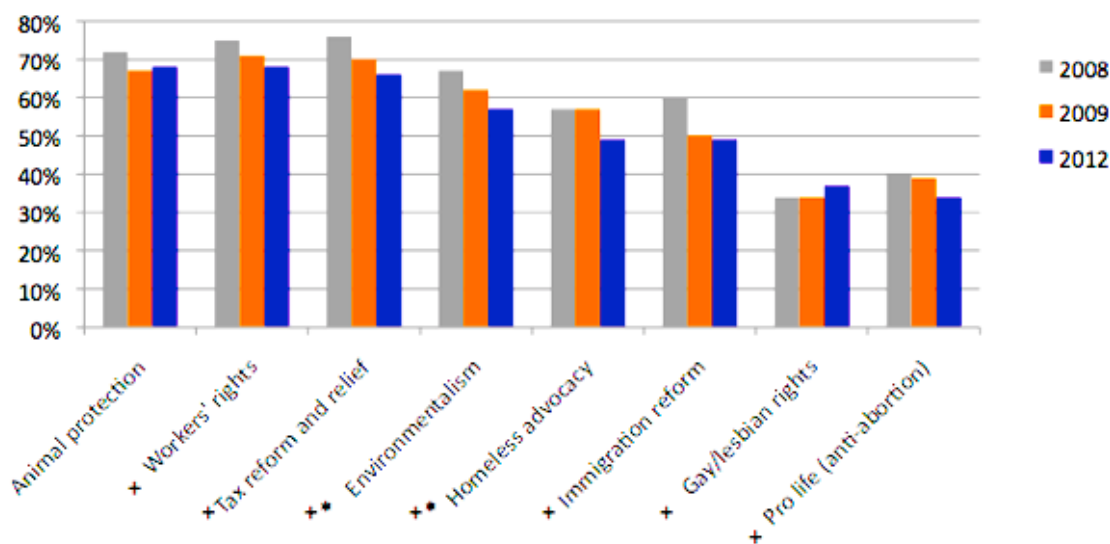
In a number of cases, the findings from 2012 vary significantly from the previous years in 2008 and 2009. However, when notable differences exist between 2008 and 2012 they will also be discussed. For reference, all three years are presented on the charts below and significant changes between 2012 and previous years are also marked. If the findings from 2012 are significantly different (i.e., $p \leq .05$) from 2009, it is marked on the graph with an asterisk (*). If the findings from 2012 are significantly different from 2008, it is marked on the graph with a cross (+).

❖ Favorability (Q1) – What is your opinion of each of the following social causes or political movements?

The animal protection movement was rated favorably across all years. In 2012, animal protection and workers' rights received more "favorable" opinions than did all other social movements listed in the survey. In both 2008 and 2009, the workers' rights and tax reform movements were more likely than animal protection to be rated as "favorable," though animal protection was still viewed as favorable by more respondents than the environmental, immigration, gay/lesbian rights, and pro-life/anti-abortion movements.

For the most part, social justice and political causes were viewed less favorably in 2012 than in previous years. This shift was significantly different between the 2008 and 2012 surveys for all movements except animal protection. Although the number of people who rated animal protection as favorable decreased from 72% in 2008 to 68% in 2012, this change was not statistically significant.

Overall Favorability, 2012 vs. 2009 & 2008

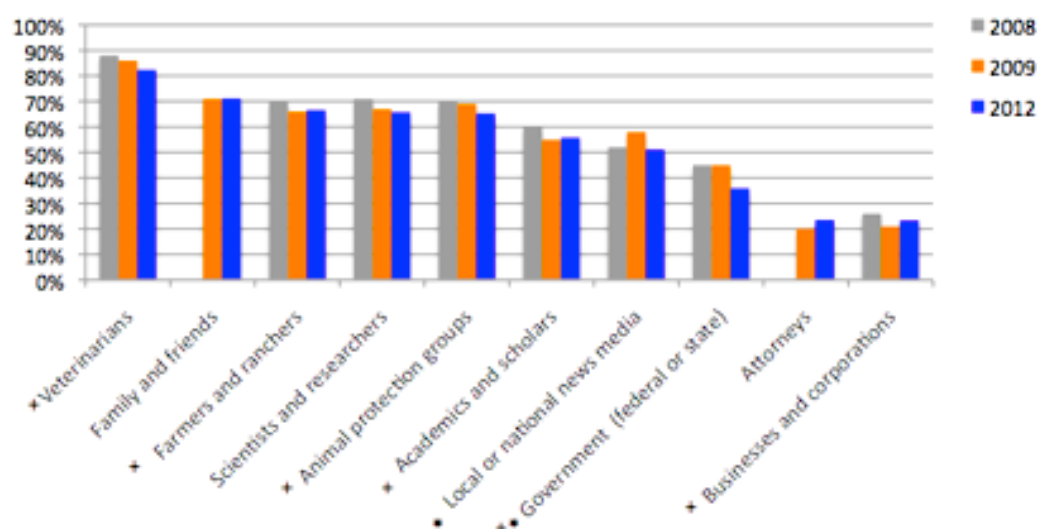


❖ **Credibility (Q2) – How much credibility do you give each of the following sources when it comes to information about animal welfare?**

Trends regarding the types of people respondents feel are credible when it comes to information about animal welfare have generally been consistent across years of the survey. In all years, respondents attributed the most credibility to veterinarians, followed by family/friends, farmers/ranchers, and scientists/researchers. In all years, a majority of respondents placed very little to no trust in attorneys and businesses/corporations.

Although trends remained the same in terms of which sources were seen as credible, most sources were generally viewed as *less* credible in 2012 than in 2008. Between 2009 and 2012 trust in both the media and the government decreased significantly as well.

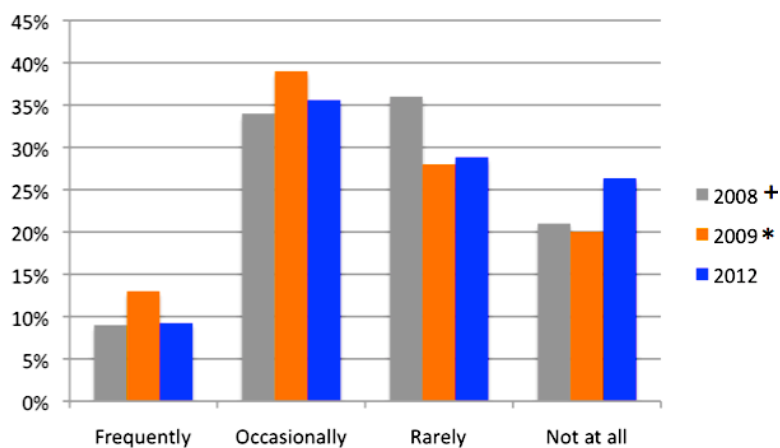
Perceived Credibility (“Significant/Moderate”), 2012 vs. 2008 & 2009**



*** Respondents were only asked about the importance of “animals in pounds and shelters” in 2009 and 2012—this question was not asked in the 2008 survey.*

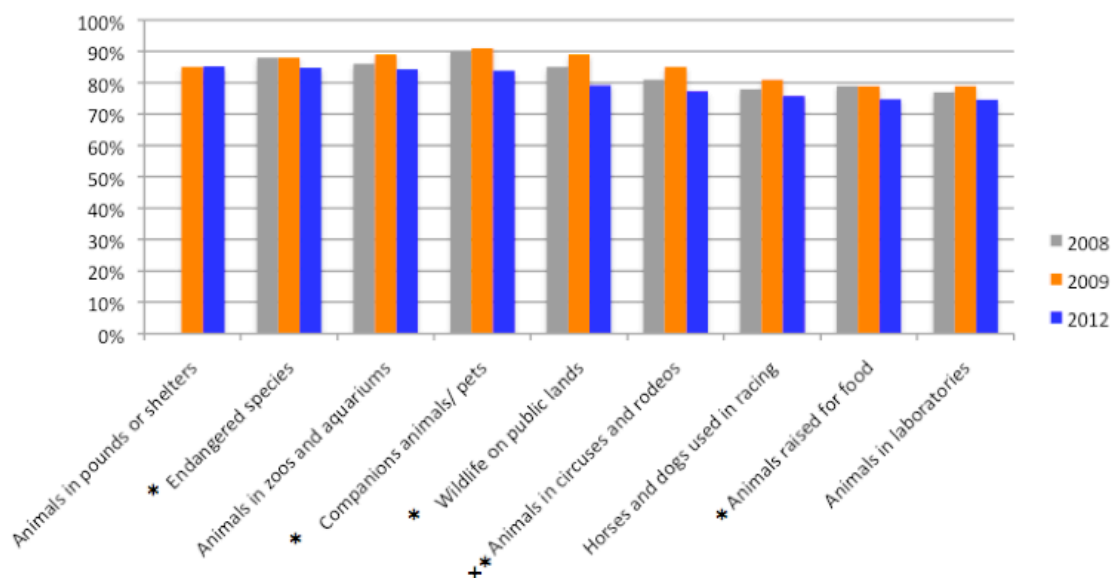
❖ **Awareness (Q7) – In the past three months, how often have you talked about or heard someone talking about animal protection, including animal rights and/or animal welfare?**

There has been a significant shift in the degree to which animal welfare and protection issues were discussed in 2012, compared with previous years. Most important, there was an increase in the number of people indicating that they had *not* recently discussed these issues. In 2012, over one-quarter (26%) of respondents had not discussed animal welfare or protection issues at all within the previous three months, a significant increase from both 2008 (21%) and 2009 (20%).

Discussion of Animal Protection Issues, 2012 vs. 2008 & 2009

❖ **Animal Welfare Importance by Situation (Q9) – How important to you is the welfare and protection of animals in each of the following situations?**

The welfare and protection of animals remains very or somewhat important to at least three-quarters of all respondents, for all animal situations addressed in the survey. While this is encouraging to advocates, in 2012 there was less perceived importance for animal welfare in all situations addressed in this survey, compared with previous years. The most significant changes occurred between 2009 and 2012, as those rating the welfare and protection of animals as important decreased significantly for endangered species, companion animals/pets, wildlife on public lands, animals in circuses and rodeos, and animals raised for food.

Perceived Importance ("Very" or "Somewhat"), 2012 vs. 2008 & 2009**

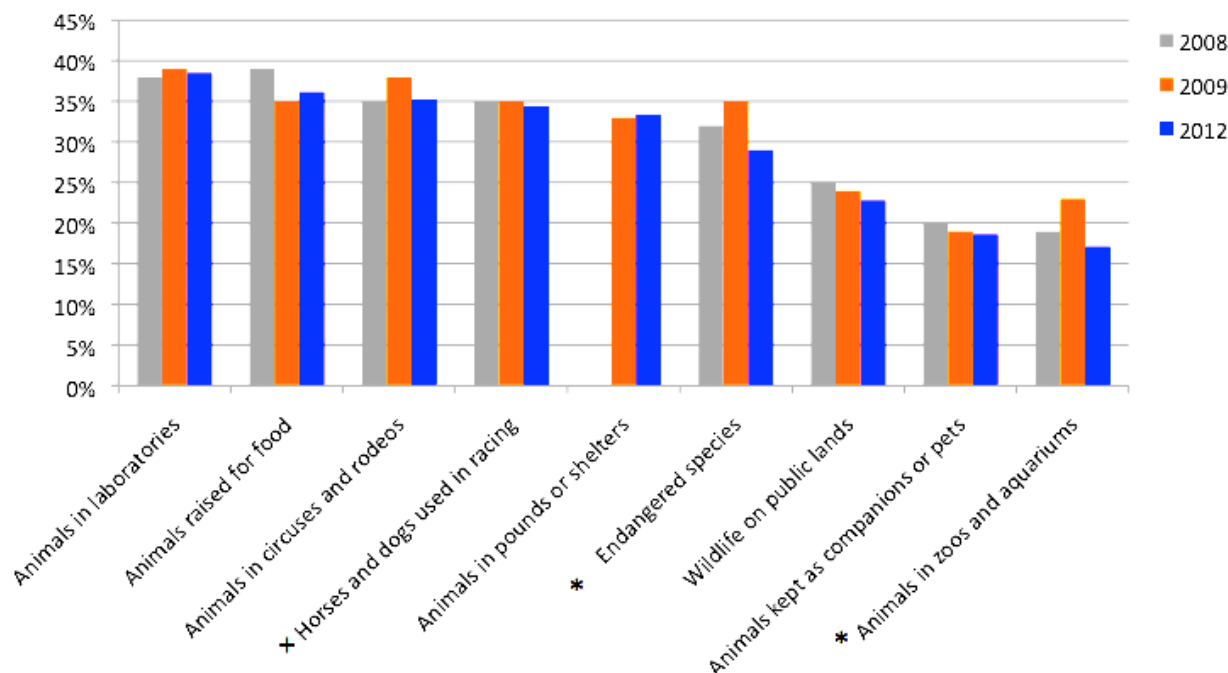
** Respondents were only asked about attitudes toward "family and friends" and "attorneys" in 2009 and 2012—these questions were not asked in the 2008 survey.

❖ **Current laws (Q13) – Do you think that laws protecting animals from inhumane treatment are adequate or inadequate for each of the following kinds of animals?**

There were few significant changes between 2012 and previous years regarding the perception of current laws protecting animals from inhumane treatment. The only significant changes from previous years were that, compared to 2009, fewer people rated laws as “not adequate” for animals in zoos and aquariums and endangered species. Similarly, compared to 2008, fewer people rated laws protecting horses and dogs used in racing as “not adequate.”

A lack of knowledge or opinion about the adequacy of laws was evident across all years of the survey as well. Across all situations in all years the number of respondents noting that they did not know if laws were or were not adequate ranged from 20%-39%.

Perceived Inadequacy of Laws (“Not Adequate”), 2012 vs. 2008 & 2009**



****** Respondents were only asked about laws protecting “animals in pounds and shelters” in 2009 and 2012—this question was not asked in the 2008 survey.

Key Implications for Animal Advocates

The *Animal Tracker* is a longitudinal study and this survey represents the fifth year of this study and a third set of data for these specific survey questions. Now that we have collected at least three data points for each of these survey questions, we are able to make more accurate comparisons to help advocates understand how public opinion is changing over time. Because the first two years of these questions were asked close together, changes over time were evaluated by comparing 2012 to each previous year separately, rather than evaluating the longitudinal changes continuously, which will be possible in future years. Please refer to the 2008 (Year 1) report for general implications of each question; the following are focused on changes in 2012 compared to the previous years (2008 and 2009).

- ❖ The overall concern for animal protection is encouraging. Across all years the animal protection movement is rated favorably and the welfare of animals in all situations discussed was rated as very or somewhat important by a majority of respondents.
- ❖ While the overall concern for animal protection is encouraging, compared to previous years there is an unfortunate decline in 2012 in concern for animals. Although general trends regarding which animals/situations are considered most important remained the same each year, the proportion of respondents who considered the welfare and protection of animals as “very” or “somewhat” important decreased for all situations. As financial concerns continue to mount for many U.S. families and political unrest is seemingly becoming more prominent, U.S. adults may be viewing the protection of nonhuman animals as less relevant.
- ❖ Discussion of animal rights and welfare issues also decreased among U.S. adults in 2012. It is important that advocates make an effort to keep the protection and welfare of animals on the forefront of the minds of the average adult, as well as among those who are influential in cultural and political arenas.
- ❖ While trust in experts regarding animal welfare is decreasing, trust in laws established to protect animals is increasing. Respondents were generally less likely to rate most groups of experts as “credible” in 2012 than in previous years. However, even while significantly fewer respondents found the government a “credible” source of information about animal welfare, more people perceived that laws protecting animals were “adequate” in 2012 (although this difference was statistically significant in only a few cases).

Background and Methodology

STUDY BACKGROUND

The *Animal Tracker* is a collaborative research project that provides animal advocates with an accurate and consistent understanding of the opinions and behavior of U.S. adults over time. The initial *Animal Tracker* survey (Year 1) was completed in June 2008 and included a larger sample size (N=1,500) for baseline analysis; subsequent years have been completed annually since, each year asking a subset of questions from Year 1.

Year	Date	Number of Respondents
1	March 2008	1,500
2	March 2009	1,000
3	March 2010	1,020
4	March 2011	1,252
5	March 2012	1,072

All years of the survey were fielded using the Knowledge Networks panel, which combines offline random digit dialing techniques with online panel research capabilities. This results in a true probability sample and survey data that are much more accurate than most other online surveys.

The Year 5 sample size is 1,072 respondents, although this number is slightly lower for most questions due to refusals, which were less than 2% in almost all cases. The possible answers were randomized for all survey questions except those that present answers in a logical order. Additionally, the results have been weighted to account for differences between survey respondents and the population being studied, in this case all non-institutionalized adults (ages 18+) currently living in the United States. All reports of statistical significance were measured using a Pearson's Chi-square test for significance, and significance was reported only if it was at or below .05.

YEAR 5 VITAL SIGNS

- Field period: 3/23/2012-4/2/2012
- Total number of surveys fielded: 1,657
- Total number of surveys completed: 1,072
- Survey response rate: 64.7%
- Median completion time: 4 minutes
- Questions included: 5 questions (#s 1, 2, 7, 9 and 13 from the Year 1 survey)

SURVEY LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that using online research methods can be subject to limitations given that some groups are not fully represented online; this typically results in under-representation of non-white, lower-income, and elderly individuals. Weighting the survey results reduces this bias considerably, but does not eliminate it entirely. Another caveat to these results is the reliance on self-reported data. Respondents' answers may differ from their actual opinions or behavior for a variety of reasons, particularly for questions involving predictions of the respondents' changes in the future.

Sponsorship Information

The *Animal Tracker* (Year 5) was sponsored by a consortium of animal advocacy organizations including Alley Cat Allies, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Animal Legal Defense Fund, Animal Welfare Trust, the Humane Society of the United States, the Leonard Bosack & Bette Kruger Charitable Foundation, the Pegasus Foundation, and World Society for the Protection of Animals (USA). The Humane Research Council initiated the collaborative study and provided discounted consulting services related to project planning, survey design, research, and analysis.

Year 6 of the *Animal Tracker* will be fielded late in the first quarter of 2013 and will include a subset of the original baseline survey's 16 questions. The exact cost of sponsorship for Year 5 is likely to be in the range of \$500 to \$1,000 per sponsor. The benefits of sponsorship are significant, including access to more detailed survey results (including "cross-tab" data for key demographic segments), ability to ask your own questions, and full permission to use the results publicly with the media, in reports, etc. New sponsors for Year 6 will be considered through January 31, 2013.

Please contact the Humane Research Council at (206) 905-9887 or info@humaneresearch.org if you or your organization is interested in sponsoring Year 6 of the *Animal Tracker*.

Year 5 Data (Topline Percentage Responses)

NOTES ABOUT THE YEAR 2 AND YEAR 5 SURVEYS

- The question numbers below correspond to the numbering used during Year 1 (to make tracking easier between years of the survey). For the complete Year 1 results and to see all 16 original questions, please visit <http://www.humanespot.org/node/2901>.
- The numbers in parentheses show the change from the previous year in which these questions were asked (Year 2, 2009), and only if the difference is statistically significant.
- Missing data (blanks/refusals) have been omitted from the analysis; however, blanks represent at most 2% of the response for any individual question or element.
- Where applicable, “don’t know” (DK), “not applicable” (NA), and “no opinion” responses have been combined.
- Responses are ranked by the first column of data. For some questions, however, it may make sense to sum columns for a more accurate impression of public opinion.
- Note: Row totals may not equal 100% and percent change may not equal zero for all questions due to rounding.

[Q1] What is your opinion of each of the following social causes or political movements?

	Favorable	Unfavorable	No Opinion	Do Not Know
Animal Protection	68%	7%	20%	5%
Workers’ rights	68	6	20	7
Tax reform and Relief	66	9	18	8
Environmentalism	57 (-5)	11 (-1)	25 (+3)	7 (+3)
Homeless advocacy	49 (-8)	9	33 (+6)	9 (+1)
Immigration reform	49	16	26	9
Gay/lesbian rights	37	27	31	5
Pro life (anti-abortion)	34	33	27	6

[Q2] How much credibility do you give to each of the following sources when it comes to information about animal welfare?

	Significant	Moderate	Very Little	None	Do Not Know
Veterinarians	50%	32%	6%	5%	7%
Animal protection groups	28	37	19	10	6
Scientists and researchers	28	38	18	8	8
Family and friends	26	45	16	5	8
Farmers and ranchers	25	42	16	9	8
Academics and scholars	17	39	21	11	13
Local or national news media	8 (-6)	44 (-1)	30 (+1)	11 (+4)	8 (+2)
Government (federal or state)	5 (-3)	31 (-5)	38 (+3)	17 (+6)	9
Attorneys	4	20	38	27	1
Businesses and corporations	3	20	44	22	11

[Q7] In the past three months, how often have you talked about or heard someone talking about animal protection, including animal rights and/or animal welfare?

Frequently (i.e. daily or almost daily)	9% (-4)
Occasionally (i.e., weekly or monthly)	36 (-4)
Rarely (i.e., once or twice)	29 (+1)
Not at all	26 (+7)

[Q9] How important to you is the welfare and protection of animals in each of the following situations?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at All Important	Do Not Know
Animals kept as companions or pets	59% (-5)	24% (-2)	7% (+3)	4% (+2)	6% (+3)
Endangered species	57 (-7)	28 (+3)	6	3 (+1)	6 (+3)
Animals in pounds or shelters	54	31	6	3	7
Animals in zoos and aquariums	53	31	7	3	6
Wildlife on public lands	46 (-9)	33 (+1)	10 (+4)	3 (+1)	7 (+3)
Animals in circuses and rodeos	46 (-3)	32 (-4)	11 (+2)	4 (+2)	7 (+3)
Horses and dogs used for racing	44	32	12	4	8
Animals in laboratories	44	30	12	5	9
Animals raised for food	42 (-5)	32 (+1)	12 (+2)	5 (-1)	9 (+4)

[Q13] Do you think that laws protecting animals from inhumane treatment are adequate or inadequate for each of the following kinds of animals?

	Adequate	Not Adequate	Do Not Know
Animals kept as companions or pets	56%	19%	25%
Animals in zoos and aquariums	52 (+5)	17 (-6)	31 (+1)
Endangered species	45 (+6)	29 (-6)	26
Wildlife on public lands	43	23	32
Animals in pounds or shelters	37	33	29
Animals raised for food	31	36	33
Horses and dogs used for racing	31	34	35
Animals in circuses and rodeos	28	35	37
Animals in laboratories	26	38	36