

Animal Tracker – Year 7

An HRC-Managed Research Study, April 2014



Report in Brief

This report summarizes results from Year 7 of the *Animal Tracker*, an annual survey of U.S. adults regarding their attitudes and behavior toward animals. In summary, the most recent survey continues to show strong support for humane education and many other animal advocacy tactics. However, there appears to be a slight erosion in this support compared with survey results from 2011 and 2008 and fewer people are engaging in animal-friendly behavior compared with previous years.

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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.

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Overview and Discussion

YEAR 7 RESULTS IN BRIEF

- ❖ Of the listed activities, U.S. adults were most likely to have watched wildlife or consumed a meat/dairy substitute during the past year. The least common activities during the past year were volunteering for animal organizations and going to circuses.
- ❖ Regarding actions that they have taken out of concern for animals, U.S. adults are most likely to have spayed/neutered their companion animals. Other relatively common actions include buying cruelty-free products and adopting an animal from a shelter.
- ❖ A strong majority of U.S. adults believes that humane education for Kindergarten-12th grade and college levels is “very” or “somewhat” important.
- ❖ A strong plurality of U.S. adults supports each of the advocacy tactics described in the survey, with most support for anti-cruelty investigations and using the media for outreach. There was the least amount of support for demonstrations/protests and calling for product boycotts.

SUMMARY RESULTS BY TOPIC (YEAR 7 ONLY)

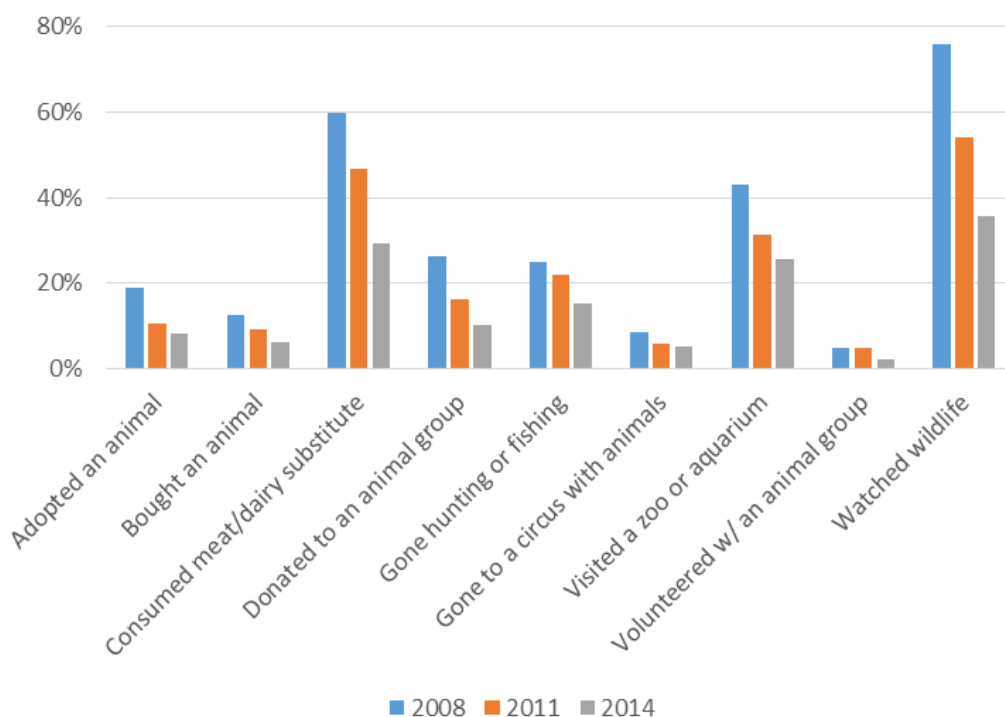
- ❖ **Personal Behavior (yes/no) [Q3]** – Respondents were asked which of a list of nine animal-related activities they have participated in during the past year, if any. The most common behaviors include watching wildlife (36% of U.S. adults engaged in this behavior in the past year), consuming a meat or dairy substitute (29%), and visiting a zoo or aquarium (26%). All other actions were selected by less than one in seven respondents: 15% hunted or fished; 10% donated to an animal group; 8% adopted an animal, 6% purchased an animal; 5% went to a circus with animals, and 2% volunteered for an animal group.
- ❖ **Personal Behavior (frequency) [Q4]** – As a follow-up to the previous question, respondents were asked the frequency with which they had engaged in the behavior (resulting in smaller sub-samples). Given the diverse nature of the activities described, they do not warrant comparison, but do provide interesting benchmarks for each behavior. In summary, very large majorities of respondents who have done so at least once in the past year say they often/sometimes consume meat or dairy substitutes (88%) and watch wildlife (88%). Small minorities of people who have done so at least once in the past year say they often/sometimes purchase an animal (15%), go to circuses (9%), or adopt an animal (6%). The other activities fall in between these extremes.
- ❖ **Actions Taken for Animals [Q6]** – When asked if their concern for animals had specifically prompted certain actions, “spay or neuter your pet” received the largest response (48%). The least commonly noted behavior was “boycott a store or a product” (10%), followed closely by voting for an animal-friendly candidate (11%) and buying meat/dairy products labeled “humane” (14%). Other actions included: bought products labeled “not tested on animals” (29%), adopted an animal from a shelter (25%), signed a petition for animals (22%), and voted for an animal-friendly law (17%). Note that this question also yielded fairly large “do not know” responses (4-15% depending on the specific behavior).

- ❖ **Humane Education [Q10]** – Regarding humane education, U.S. adults are very supportive of incorporating animal topics into educational curricula at Kindergarten-12th grade and college levels. Overall, about two-thirds of survey respondents say doing so is important, including 25% of adults who say “very” important and another 41% who say “somewhat” important. About one in six respondents (16%) say that incorporating humane education is “not very important,” while 9% say it is “not at all important” and 9% say they do not know.
- ❖ **Advocacy Tactics [Q11]** – For all of the tactics listed in the survey, more U.S. adults support the tactic than are opposed. Three advocacy tactics received clear majority support: 70% support anti-cruelty investigations, 70% support using the media, and 55% support speaking in schools. Nearly half (48%) of respondents support state ballot initiatives, 47% support filing lawsuits to protect animals, and 46% support lobbying government officials, while substantial proportions also support demonstrating and protesting (42% support, 27% *oppose*) and calling for product boycotts (42% support, 26% *oppose*). This question had very high combined “do not know” and “no opinion” rates of 21-36%, with the most ambivalence (or lack of knowledge) surrounding initiatives, boycotts, lobbying, and protesting.

CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

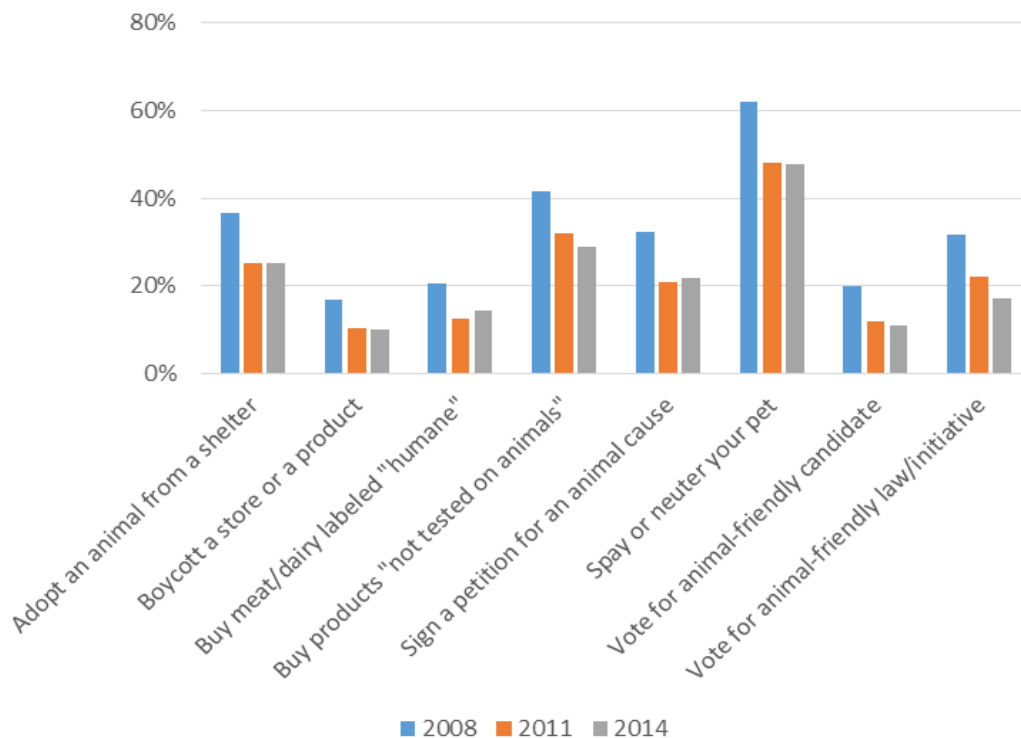
Although the Year 7 survey results are generally consistent with the findings from previous years, there appears to be some decline in support for animal protection over that time. This is evidenced by declining animal-friendly behavior as well as lower perceived importance of humane education and less support for animal advocacy tactics. In most cases, this decline represents a consistent trend over the life of the Animal Tracker, from the first year (2008) to the most recent seventh year (2014). These differences over time are outlined below by subject area.

- ❖ **Personal Behavior (yes/no) [Q3]** – Compared with 2008, U.S. adults in 2014 were significantly less likely to engage in all but two of the animal-related activities addressed in the survey. This includes both activities that benefit and those that harm animals. In 2014, far fewer people reported watching wildlife (down 40% since 2008) or consuming a meat/dairy substitute (down 31% over the same period). Other activities also show declining engagement, including visiting a zoo or aquarium (down 17%), donating to an animal group (down 16%), adopting an animal (down 11%), and going hunting or fishing (down 10%). The proportion of U.S. adults saying they purchased an animal was also down 6% during this period.

In the past year, have you personally done any of the following? (% saying “yes”)

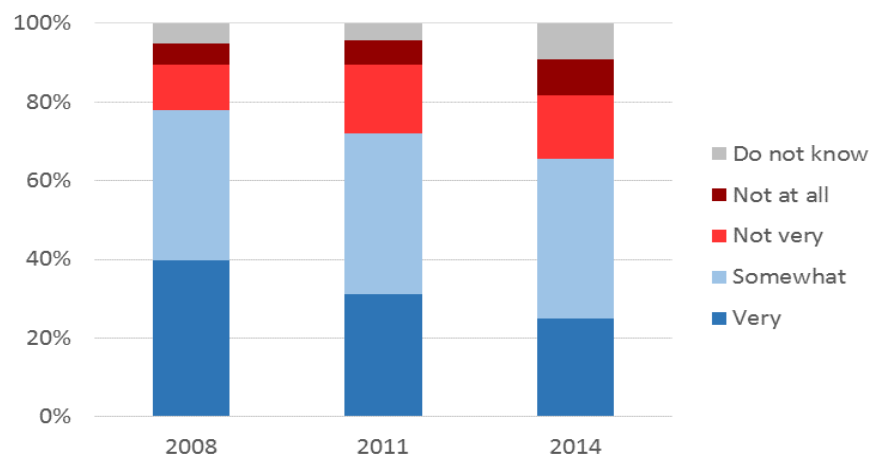
- ❖ **Personal Behavior (frequency) [Q4]** – Respondents also engaged less *frequently* in the activities described in question 3 than they have in previous years, but the differences are much less pronounced. It should be noted that this question was only asked if the respondent said “yes” to the given activity in question 3, resulting in smaller sample sizes. That said, there were meaningful differences for only two of the activities covered in the latest survey. Unfortunately, those who volunteered for an animal group at some point during the past year were more likely to say they “rarely” did so than in 2008.
- ❖ **Actions Taken for Animals [Q6]** – When asked if their concern for animals had “ever” caused specific behavior, U.S. adults once again reported substantial declines from 2008 to 2014. In fact, the drop was significant for all of the actions listed in the survey, though most of the decline was in the period 2008 to 2011 and not 2011 to 2014. The most substantial changes over the full time period (2008-2014) were that: Fewer people voted for an animal-friendly law or initiative (down 15%), spayed/neutered their pet (down 14%), or purchased products labeled as “not tested on animals” (down 13%). Additionally, fewer respondents said they have adopted an animal from a shelter (down 12%), signed a petition for an animal cause (down 10%), or voted for an animal-friendly candidate (down 9%).

Has your concern for animals ever caused you to do any of the following? (% saying “yes”)



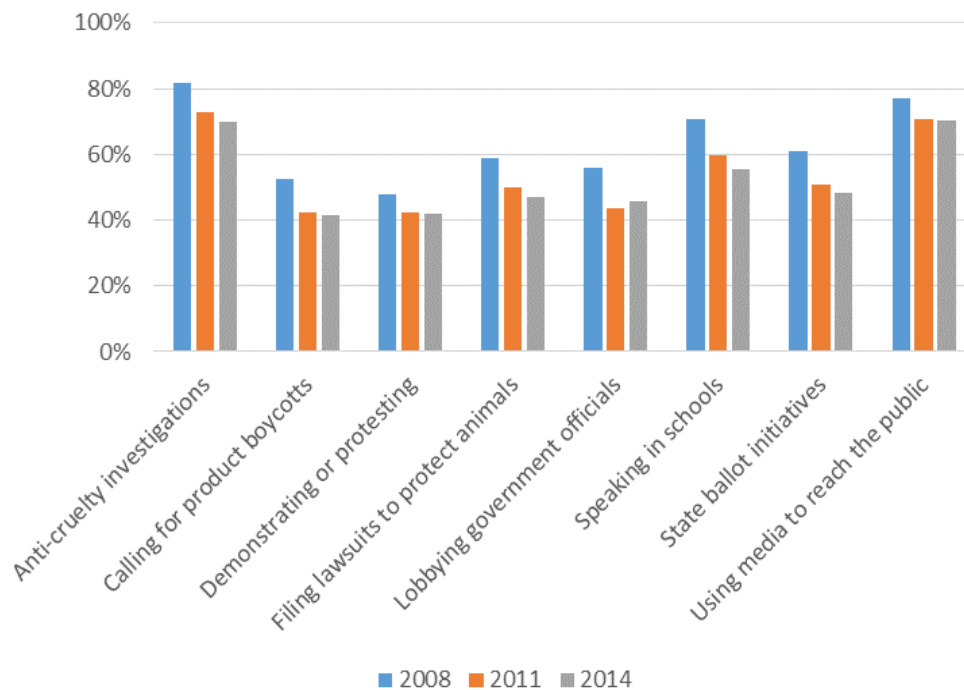
- ❖ **Humane Education [Q10]** – Unfortunately, the erosion of support for animal protection since the inauguration of the *Animal Tracker* extends to humane education. Specifically, U.S. adults who say humane education (for K-12 and college) is “very” important declined from a high of 40% in 2008, to 31% in 2011, and to 25% in 2014. Additionally, those saying humane education is “not at all” important has almost doubled over time, from 5% in 2008 to 9% in 2014. Similarly, the proportion of U.S. adults saying they do not know how important humane education is increased from 5% to 9% over that period.

How important is it that schools and teachers (K-12 and college level) incorporate humane education, including animal welfare topics, into their lessons?



- ❖ **Advocacy Tactics [Q11]** – Compared with 2008, U.S. adults in 2014 are significantly less supportive of all of the advocacy-related tactics listed in the survey. However, the biggest drops in support came during the 2008-2011 period, while changes were marginal from 2011 to 2014. Taking the longer view, support has declined the most for speaking in schools (down 15% from 2008 to 2014), state ballot initiatives (down 13%), filing lawsuits (down 12%), and conducting anti-cruelty investigations (down 12%). There is also substantially less support for calling for product boycotts (down 11%) and lobbying government officials (down 10%).

How much do you support the following tactics? (% supporting strongly/somewhat)



Key Implications for Animal Advocates

The *Animal Tracker* is a longitudinal study and this survey represents its seventh year 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 questions, we are able to identify preliminary trends to help advocates understand how public opinion is changing over time. Please refer to the 2008 (Year 1) and 2011 (Year 4) reports for a more complete background and the general findings for each question; the following implications are focused on changes in 2014 compared to these two surveys.

General Implications

Engagement in animal-related activities has declined significantly since 2008, which is a two-sided coin for animal advocates. While animal-friendly behavior such as donations and eating meat/dairy substitutes are less common than before, so are behaviors that harm animals including going to zoos and aquariums and hunting or fishing. Although it is untested, HRC believes the decreasing frequency of animal-related behavior may be attributable to the U.S. economic recession and its ongoing impact on household budgets. This has likely led to restricted spending including fewer animal adoptions, fewer outings to watch wildlife, and fewer donations.

Although having fewer people engage in these behaviors does not necessarily indicate declining support for animal protection, there are signs of that in other questions. Particularly worrying is the declining belief in the importance of humane education. In 2014, two-thirds of U.S. adults (66%) said it is “very” or “somewhat” important, which remains a solid majority, but this number is down from 78% in 2008. Those saying either that humane education is “not at all” important or that they do not know are a combined 18%, or nearly one-fifth of the adult population.

Lastly, support for all of the advocacy tactics covered in the survey has declined since 2008, although in most cases this drop has been modest. Additionally, the apparent erosion of support for these tactics does not indicate a substantial increase in *opposition* to them; rather, it reflects more people having “no opinion.” In 2008, the average “no opinion” response for all eight tactics was 12%, while in 2014 it was 23%. This suggests that people are becoming increasingly ambivalent about these types of tactics. In addition to ambivalence, “no opinion” can represent simply not caring about the issue, or not being sufficiently engaged in it to answer the question.

Implications by Issue Area

Farmed Animals – Consumption of meat and dairy substitutes has declined by nearly a third since 2008, which is potentially cause for concern. This may be attributable to other factors, however, including the possibility that consumers are not thinking of these alternatives as “substitutes” or through increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and other whole foods. Consumption of meat and dairy products labeled as “humane” has also decreased slightly since 2008. Lastly, the decline in support for anti-cruelty investigations may have strong implications for farmed animal advocates that rely on such investigations – and the evidence they produce – for their work.

Companion Animals – Since 2008, respondents saying they *bought* an animal declined by 6%, however the number of people who *adopted* a companion animal dropped by nearly twice that amount (11%). Both of these may be attributable to tighter household budgets in the U.S., but with the number of animal buyers nearly equaling animal adopters in 2014, this is a trend worth monitoring more closely. Regarding spay/neuter, those saying they have altered a companion animal has dropped somewhat since 2008. However, that decline occurred from 2008 to 2011 (there was no change from 2011–2014). Spay/neuter remains relatively common, with about half of U.S. adults saying they have had a companion animal sterilized.

Animals Used for Research – The proportion of U.S. adults saying they have purchased products labeled “not tested on animals” has declined since 2008. This may represent a shift away from cruelty-free and natural products due to cost reasons or some other cause. On a related note, there has been slight decline in support for using product boycotts as a tactic. In addition, the drop in perceived importance of humane education mentioned earlier in this report may also have implications for the use of animal dissection as a tool in the classroom.

Wildlife – In 2014, far fewer people self-report “watching wildlife” than in 2008; this proportion has declined by nearly half to just over a third of U.S. adults in 2014. This is curious given that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service surveys indicate that participation in wildlife watching was essentially unchanged from 2006 to 2011*. Regarding other wildlife-related behavior, the *Animal Tracker* Year 7 found that fewer people reported visiting zoos and aquariums than in 2008, and fewer people said that they had participated in hunting or fishing.

Advocacy – Some lower-engagement forms of animal advocacy are also less common than they were in 2008. Specifically, the proportion of U.S. adults reporting that they signed petitions or boycotted certain types of products is down since 2014. Additionally, those who report that they voted for animal-friendly laws or initiatives declined from 2008 to 2014, but this may be attributable to a lack of voting opportunities relative to 2008. Lastly, donations to animal causes are down substantially since 2008 while self-reported volunteerism has declined only slightly.

* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2011), *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, & Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/fishing.html>

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 the purpose of baseline analysis. Subsequent surveys have been completed annually since then, with each year asking a subset of questions from Year 1. Following are the sample sizes and error margins for all years of the *Animal Tracker*.

Year	Date	Number of Respondents	Margin of Error
1	March 2008	1,500	+/- 2.5%
2	March 2009	1,000	+/- 3.1%
3	March 2010	1,020	+/- 3.1%
4	March 2011	1,252	+/- 2.8%
5	March 2012	1,072	+/- 3.0%
6	March 2013	1,028	+/- 3.1%
7	March 2014	1,015	+/- 3.1%

All years of the survey have been fielded using the GfK/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 7 sample size is 1,015 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 U.S.

YEAR 7 VITAL SIGNS

- ❖ Field period: 3/27/2014-4/1/2014
- ❖ Total number of surveys fielded: 3,148
- ❖ Total number of surveys completed: 1,015
- ❖ Survey response rate: 32.2%
- ❖ Median completion time: 3.8 minutes
- ❖ 5 questions (#s 3, 4, 6, 10, and 11 from the original survey)

SURVEY LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that the use of online research methods could 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. This is in addition to the general nonresponse bias that results from a 32% response rate; it is possible that non-respondents have different opinions and behavior. 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. Additionally, interpretation of some terms (e.g., "often" and "sometimes") may vary from respondent to respondent.

Sponsorship Information

The *Animal Tracker* (Year 7) was generously sponsored by a consortium of animal advocacy organizations including Alley Cat Allies, American Anti-Vivisection Society, Animal Legal Defense Fund, Animal Welfare Trust, Farm Sanctuary, the Humane Society of the United States, Maddie's Fund, New England Anti-Vivisection Society, and the Pettus Crowe Foundation. The Humane Research Council initiated the collaborative study and provided consulting services related to project planning, survey design, research, and analysis.

Year 8 of the *Animal Tracker* will be fielded in the first quarter of 2015 and will repeat the questions asked most recently in 2012. This year will cover general opinions about animal advocates, the perceived credibility of advocates compared with other sources of information, the amount of discussion of topics related to animal protection, the importance of protecting animals in specific situations, and the perceived adequacy of current laws protecting different animals.

The cost of sponsorship for Year 8 is expected to be in the range of \$700 to \$800 per sponsor; the exact cost depends on the number of sponsors that participate. The benefits of sponsorship are substantial, including receiving access to more detailed survey results (including "cross-tab" data for all key demographic segments) and having permission to use the survey results with the media, in publications, etc. New sponsors for Year 8 will be considered through January 31, 2015.

If you are interested in learning more about the recently completed Year 7 of the *Animal Tracker* or sponsoring the upcoming Year 8 survey, please contact Che Green at the Humane Research Council at (206) 905-9887 or info@humaneresearch.org.

To access reports and data from previous years of the *Animal Tracker*, as well as an interactive graphing tool to compare data for different years and demographic groups, please visit HRC's www.humanespot.org.

Year 7 Data – Topline Percentage Responses

NOTES ABOUT THE YEAR 7 SURVEY

- 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 survey (Year 4, 2011), if the difference is larger than the overall survey error margin.
- Missing data (blanks/refusals) have been omitted from the analysis; however, these represent at most 1.6% of the response for any individual question or element.

[Q3] In the past year, have you personally done any of the following? Please provide an answer for each item.

	Yes	No
Adopted an animal	8%	92%
Bought an animal	6	94
Consumed a meat or dairy substitute	29 (-18)	71 (+18)
Donated to an animal group	10 (-6)	90 (+6)
Gone hunting or fishing	15 (-7)	85 (+7)
Gone to a circus with animals	5	95
Visited a zoo or aquarium	26 (-6)	74 (+6)
Volunteered with an animal group	2	98
Watched wildlife	36 (-18)	64 (+18)

[Q4] In the past year, roughly how often have you personally done any of the following?

Note that this question is asked only of those who say “yes” in Q3, resulting in sub-samples.

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Do not know
Adopted an animal (N=80)	1%	5% (+4)	83%	4%	7%
Bought an animal (N=60)	2	13 (+4)	79	2	4
Consumed a meat or dairy substitute (N=291)	57 (-5)	32 (+9)	11	1	0
Donated to an animal group (N=101)	0 (-4)	40 (+12)	58 (-6)	1	0
Gone hunting or fishing (N=152)	12	47 (+6)	40 (-4)	0	0
Gone to a circus with animals (N=51)	1	8 (+6)	84	5	1 (-7)
Visited a zoo or aquarium (N=255)	1	20	78	0	0
Volunteered with an animal group (N=21)	17 (-3)	23	59 (+20)	1 (-8)	0 (-7)
Watched wildlife (N=356)	52 (+10)	36 (-4)	12 (-5)	0	0

[Q6] Has your concern for animals ever caused you to do any of the following? Please mark “yes” only if your motive was animal welfare or protection.

	Yes	No	Do not know
Adopted an animal from a shelter	25%	70%	5%
Boycott a store or a product	10	82	8
Buy meat or dairy products labeled “humane”	14	71	15 (-4)
Buy products labeled as “not tested on animals”	29	62 (+6)	10
Sign a petition for an animal cause	22	71	7
Spay or neuter your pet	48	48	4
Vote for an animal-friendly candidate	11	75 (+5)	14 (-4)
Vote for an animal-friendly law or initiative	17 (-5)	72 (+6)	11

[Q10] How important is it that schools and teachers (K-12 and college level) incorporate humane education, including animal welfare topics, into their lessons?

Very important	25% (-6)
Somewhat important	41
Not very important	16
Not at all important	9
Do not know	9 (+5)

[Q11] Social and political movements use a variety of tactics to create change for their issues. In general, how much do you support or oppose each of the following tactics?

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion	Do not know
Anti-cruelty investigation	33%	37%	5%	3%	17%	5%
Calling for product boycotts	11%	31%	17%	8%	27%	6%
Demonstrating or protesting	9%	33%	18%	9%	26% (+3)	5%
Filing lawsuits to protect animals	16%	31%	16%	9%	23%	5%
Lobbying government officials	12%	34% (+5)	13%	10%	24%	7%
Speaking in schools	18%	37% (-3)	12%	7%	20%	5%
State ballot initiatives	14%	34% (-4)	11%	5%	27%	9%
Using media to reach the public	28%	42%	5%	4%	17%	4%