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# Do You Know the *Real* ASPCA?





## Summary

Most people think the ASPCA is about dogs and cats. But the ASPCA has increasingly become a radical animal liberation organization. Hiding behind its undeserved reputation, the organization has utilized unethical financial schemes to boost its bottom line and pay its executives huge salaries.

## Hoarding Money While Shelter Pets Die

While nearly 1 million animals are euthanized each year in the U.S., the ASPCA is paying its executives huge salaries and sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars—including millions socked away in the Caribbean.

According to its most recent tax filings, in 2021 the ASPCA had \$390 million in revenue and \$575 million in assets, including \$310 million in investments and \$105 million in savings. The ASPCA has about \$11 million in offshore accounts in the Caribbean.

The same filings show that only about 2% of the ASPCA's budget is given as grants to community pet shelters. The ASPCA's grants to pet shelters in 2021 are only about half of the money the ASPCA reported keeping in the Caribbean.

ASPCA CEO “Million Dollar Matt” Bershadker makes \$856,785 in base salary and another \$108,740 in benefits. In total, 259 people at the ASPCA make six figures.

In 2021, **CBS News investigation** found that “Since 2008, the ASPCA has raised more than \$2 billion for animal welfare. In that time, it has spent \$146 million, or about 7% of the total money raised, in grants to local animal welfare groups. But during that same time period it spent nearly three times that, at least \$421 million, on fundraising.”

## Complaints

The ASPCA runs one adoption center in New York City and is not affiliated with local SPCAs. However, the ASPCA's misleading name and pervasive advertising have allowed it to vacuum up donations that would otherwise go to local pet shelters across the country.

Local SPCAs in California **filed a complaint** with the California AG (Kamala Harris) in 2011 over name confusion and lack of funding from the ASPCA. The ASPCA denied it is profiting off of name confusion with



local SPCAs. However, **according to** CBS News' 2021 investigation, the ASPCA prohibits groups that use its mailing list from including language that the ASPCA is distinct from local humane societies.

Countless SPCAs nationwide have fallen victim to this scheme. Matt Stanton, a spokesman for the New Jersey SPCA noted "they make it very difficult because a lot of people have given money to the ASPCA thinking they're operating in New Jersey. A lot of people believe they are the umbrella organization. We get questions all the time, 'Aren't you part of ASPCA?' It's like a David-Goliath situation."

**Numerous clients** of the ASPCA pet insurance have complained that the program is a ripoff. Out of 280 reviews on Yelp, 222 were for one-star out of five—with several reviewers wishing they could give zero stars. Denials of coverage for "pre-existing condition(s)" are allegedly common.

## ASPCA Kills Dogs

In May 2019, **26 dogs died** during an ASPCA transport from Mississippi to Wisconsin. The news learned of it due to a leaked internal email. The ASPCA has not been forthcoming about what happened and who was held accountable—if anyone. The agency refused to provide any details other than the dogs dying during transport. **Observers believe** the most likely cause of death was either overheating or carbon monoxide poisoning.

To put into perspective, it would have cost the ASPCA roughly \$15,000 to protect the dogs by equipping each transport van with an adequate HVAC system, only 0.006% of their total revenues.

In 2009, the ASPCA "saved" a one-year-old dog named Oreo, an abused dog who was thrown off the roof of a six-floor Brooklyn apartment building. The ASPCA nursed her back to health and dubbed her the "miracle dog." The ASPCA proceeded to use the dog's story as a fundraising campaign, which reportedly raised millions of dollars.

After the money was counted and deposited into ASPCA bank accounts, the ASPCA **made the decision to kill her**, despite a no kill sanctuary offering to save her.

After Oreo was killed, "Oreo's Law" was introduced in New York which would have made it illegal for shelters, including the ASPCA, to kill animals who rescue groups were willing to save. It was estimated that if the law passed, roughly 25,000 animals a year would be saved.

The ASPCA made it its mission to ensure that they would not be and succeeded in killing the law every year it was introduced.



## \$9.3 Million Racketeering Settlement

In 2012, the ASPCA **paid \$9.3 million** to settle a racketeering and fraud lawsuit filed against it. The lawsuit alleged that the ASPCA and other activist groups engaged in a scheme to pursue frivolous litigation against the owner of the Ringling Bros. circus. The court found that the key witness for the animal rights activists was “essentially a paid plaintiff” and “not credible,” and dismissed the ASPCA’s claims.

Few charities have faced a lawsuit under the RICO Act, a federal law passed to combat the mafia. But the ASPCA has, and paid \$9.3 million to settle it.

## What Local Shelters Say About the ASPCA

“Ever since the ASPCA began to aggressively fund-raise several years ago, humane societies and SPCAs throughout the country have suffered. Our member humane societies and SPCAs frequently report hearing from people who gave to the ASPCA believing they were giving to their local shelter. These shelters believe they are missing out on funds that were intended for them.” -Erica Gaudet Hughes, executive director of the State Humane Association of California

“The major problems that most SPCAs have is that the ASPCA does not fund these agencies. We receive no money from them at all.” -Gary Rogers, president of the Nassau County SPCA

“[A] bulk of our time and our staff time is spent trying to explain the difference between national and local. We need our donors and the people in our community to know where their money is going.” -Jo Sullivan, chief community and development officer at the Houston SPCA

“If they wish to do national ads, they should say where they do their work....We just think they should say where the money is being used and that it doesn’t go to help animals in Massachusetts.” -Carter Luke, head of Massachusetts SPCA