

# Follow-up Questions for The Humane League (2017)

Initial Follow-Up / Received August 25, 2017

**If your organization receives any restricted donations, approximately how much did it receive in the past year?**

The only restricted grant funding is the Open Phil grants (detailed on their website) and the specific funding for online ads, included in the budget linked to above (all of our online outreach ads are from earmarked funding). Note: Open Phil is quite flexible about our spending as long as the campaign outcomes are good.

**If your organization has any revenue-generating programs, it would be helpful for us to know what those programs are and how much revenue they generated in the past year.**

We do not!

**Please provide a list of board members and brief descriptions of their occupations or backgrounds (job titles/industries or links to LinkedIn are sufficient).**

1. [Harish Sethu](#)
2. [Mark Middleton \(board chair\)](#)
3. [Lydia Chaudhry \(board vice chair\)](#)—(Lydia stepped down from her volunteer role as THL's operations support and volunteer coordinator in February 2016)
4. Denise Tremblay—Denise, who just retired, doesn't have a LinkedIn. Her background is in finances for a major university. She is also a long-time AR activist.

*[Nick Cooney](#) recently left THL's board. As of early November 2017, we currently have an open seat on the board which we are looking to fill shortly.*

Clarification / Received Oct 6, 2017

**Do you have an internal estimate that you can share with us for the number of farmed chickens that the policy changes THL was involved with in the previous 12 months will impact annually, once those policy changes come into effect?**

We have worked with several groups who are aligned on the broiler campaign to track the commitments and make some estimates where we can, but in most cases we can not be very confident because most companies keep their purchasing information very confidential. We do have accurate information on the relative sizes of the companies that we campaign against, so that is generally how we make our estimates.

**Does “to reduce as much farm animal suffering as possible” fairly describe THL’s mission? Do you have a more accurate or complete statement of their mission they can share with us?**

THL's mission is to reduce animal suffering by inspiring change at all levels. We work to reform the way farm animals are treated, while also inspiring people to make more compassionate food

choices. We engage in hard-hitting corporate campaigns and wide-ranging outreach and education programs, supported by an extensive network of organizations, activists and supporters around the world.

**Did Humane League Labs' governance become more independent in 2016, or was it always run separately?**

HLL has always been led by a member of THL's board rather than THL staff. First by Nick Cooney and then by Harish Sethu. THL staff were involved in carrying out some of the outreach or surveying in early studies. Analysis was carried out by volunteers.

Critical Questions / Received Oct 6, 2017

**There are many more farmed fish than other species of farmed animals. Has THL considered allocating more of their resources towards farmed fish advocacy?**

We have considered this issue and hope to begin work on fish welfare issues in the future. Our animal welfare specialist, Vicky Bond, has put together her recommendations for potential reforms that could improve the lives of fish.

There are a number of factors that make fish advocacy difficult. There is limited information on what reforms might be most effective at reducing suffering. There are many species of fish who are used for food, each with its own unique preferences and physiology. Finally, it's not clear how resonant the issue of fish suffering will be with the public, which may hurt our potential for grassroots campaigning.

There is one reform across species that seems like the low-hanging fruit: slaughter. Our hope is that our corporate outreach may be able to encourage less cruel forms of slaughter to be adopted across the fish farming industry. As our other institutional work and understanding of potential fish welfare asks develop, we are very interested in looking to potential fish campaigns as a next step. Currently, our belief is that the best use of our resources is to win the broiler reform campaign as quickly as possible and to also make sure that existing cage-free commitments are enforced.

**Some would argue that Humane League Labs' previous work has involved questionable methodological choices (for example, conducting five studies with the same participant pool, not making use of control groups, and not controlling for desirability bias), and that this raises concerns about HLL's future work. To what extent do you agree with this assessment of HLL's past work? What steps, if any, has THL taken to improve the quality of HLL's research?**

It is true that early HLL studies had a number of weaknesses. It is important to keep in mind that these studies were led by activists, not professional researchers, and conducted with almost no budget. Also, these were among the first such studies conducted in the movement and we are glad for our interest in results-oriented activism that led us to embark on these studies, even if imperfectly.

Our [2016 commitments](#), written by the new Director, Harish Sethu, address these types of methodological concerns. In addition to these commitments for future research, HLL is also reanalyzing the data in some of the reports that have generated the most public interest. In fact, the first of these reanalysis reports has already been released (see [here](#)) and editorial comments have been made on [the original blog post](#) indicating our current position on the conclusions of the study. In the coming months, HLL will be releasing reanalysis reports on a few additional older studies as well to clarify our assessment of the conclusions reported therein.

**Some of THL's activities (perhaps particularly protests) have the potential to backfire, either by leading to legislation targeting activists or by negatively affecting public opinion of activists. Has THL considered these possibilities?**

THL has considered these possibilities, and we've worked to mitigate any negative impact of our work. Our protests, for example, require professional attire, the use of THL-printed signs with a clear message, and they are carried out in silence. THL staff or trained volunteers are on hand to answer any questions from passerby or media, which allows for control of our message. We have found a remarkably positive public response to this style of protest. We accept that activism is never going to be unanimously popular among the public, but the steps we take are likely why we have received more positive media coverage (outside of industry journals) and limited backlash from the public during events.

**Some would argue that the development of new cultured and plant-based food technology will be the key turning point for ending animal farming, and that a shift in public attitudes will naturally follow. What role does THL play in facilitating the development and acceptance of technologies?**

We agree that replacements for animal products are a crucial piece in the strategy to end factory farming. We see our work as supporting this transition in three ways: first, our welfare campaigns act as a deterrent for companies to partner with factory farms (i.e., if you serve chicken, a campaign from THL is a cost that you may incur), while acting as a competitive advantage for non-animal options. Second, our outreach and education campaigns increase the public's concerns about animal-based foods and drive up demand for alternatives or reforms on farms. Third, when opportunities present themselves, THL has actively worked with institutions to replace animal foods with plant-based options (most successfully with meatless monday campaigns, meat reduction asks of dining companies, and working with universities to completely replace their standard mayonnaise with Just Mayo).

We are also closely watching the marketplace for other opportunities that may present themselves. For example, we hope that someday soon a very inexpensive veg 'chicken nugget' will exist so that we can work with cost-sensitive institutions to swap out their meat nuggets. Eventually, it would be wonderful to have a large part of our institutional work focus on campaigns like this that can entirely replace factory farmed products.

**There are some who think that the scale of suffering in the wild is much greater than the scale of farmed animal suffering. Does THL agree with this assessment? Is THL working to address wild animal suffering in any way?**

The astronomical number of animals in the wild certainly means that the scale of potential suffering is extremely high. At this time, we see the greatest opportunity for animal advocates to work on factory farming, as it is a much more tractable issue. Changing views on the treatment of farm animals can hopefully lead to greater compassion for all animals, including wild animals. We are not currently working on any wild animal suffering issues.

**Some have argued that the non-bindingness of the corporate pledges THL campaigns for, particularly the United Egg Producers chick-sexing pledge, means that these pledges do not meaningfully support improvements in the treatment of farmed animals. What are your thoughts on this?**

It's true that pledges from corporations are not legally binding, but we still see them as critically valuable for a few reasons. The first is that they do appear to drive real change in the standards on farms, as we have seen in the major shift towards cage-free following the slew of commitments over the last few years. This seems to show that egg producers are taking these commitments seriously. Reading industry publications points to this, too, as they are constantly discussing how to handle the transition to cage-free. Additionally, these corporate commitments pave the way for the eventual laws that fully ban production and sale of cage eggs, like we saw in MA and which are now underway in CA.

The UEP chick-sexing pledge has resulted in a large number of interested parties investing in this research and working to put the new technologies in place. We think that the pledge has greatly accelerated the timeline for adopting this technology and has created favorable coverage for the movement. In the case of the UEP pledge, it took only one meeting with the UEP to put this in place. To us, this is very meaningful, and a worthy use of our resources.

The media conversation and discussion that these campaigns generate are another benefit beyond the improvements that they encourage. Increasing public awareness about the conditions on factory farms while providing an opportunity to speak out is useful in building a movement of advocates and concerned citizens around the world.

## Repeated Critical Questions / Received Oct 6, 2017

**Why does THL use local grassroots offices, when it might be that more animals can be affected on a national level?**

The majority of our resources are focused on our national (and now international) strategy. Our local grassroots offices play a key role in pushing for this change, as they provide the boots on the ground to pressure major corporations and institutions to produce commitments. Regardless of the scale of the change we are asking for, the reality is that we need activists who are organized by leaders in their community to support this work, whether it is gathering signatures for a ballot initiative, carrying out demonstrations, or participating in our volunteer events. These local offices are also an excellent entry point for new people into the movement, where they can gain valuable leadership and organizing skills from our professional staff.

In 2017, we significantly expanded our local presence in communities around the U.S. with our national volunteer program. This allows individuals in locations where we do not have a grassroots presence to be directly involved in our advocacy work. The program has been so successful, we very quickly needed to add an additional program resource to manage the growing ranks of volunteers. The popularity of this initiative, including how quickly our roster of volunteers has grown, points clearly to a need and potential on the grassroots level for more opportunity to be involved. These volunteers are actively supporting our corporate campaigns, allowing us to put additional pressure on national companies.

**Why does a significant portion of THL's outreach focus on dietary change, e.g., reducing meat consumption, rather than directly shifting public attitudes?**

In general, last year's write-up is fine. I'd add to that though: The Humane League has shifted more of our grassroots staff time to support our corporate campaign work locally and to focus on movement building in the form of volunteer recruitment and training. We still carry out a good amount of outreach, but try to limit activities like leafleting to volunteer events rather than using our paid staff, with some exceptions made for outstanding opportunities, like Warped Tour.

When we do engage in individual diet change work, we intentionally select events that will be great opportunities for training volunteers and building community. They are fun and simple, so they provide a great introduction to advocacy for volunteers to then get involved in other work like our campaign actions.

**Does THL worry that focusing on some of the most extreme confinement practices could lead to complacency with other forms of suffering farmed animals endure or with meat consumption?**

I'm fine with last year's write-up being used for this answer.