



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Reward Offered in Possible Bear Poaching Case in Pennsylvania**

(June 23, 2010) — The Humane Society of the United States and The Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust are offering a reward of up to \$2,500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for illegally killing the bear whose paw was discovered in Springfield Township, Pa.

### **The Case:**

According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, on May 15, a citizen discovered a black bear paw on the road. Officials believe that the bear it belonged to may have been poached.

In Pennsylvania, it is only legal to kill bears in November. Bear body parts like paws and gallbladders are extremely valuable on the black market, and officials believe that this bear may have been killed for the commercialization of its parts.

“The illegal killing of wildlife for profit is a serious crime and evidences the need for stronger poaching laws in Pennsylvania,” said Sarah Speed, Pennsylvania state director for The HSUS. “Two bills awaiting action in the state legislature, H.B. 1859 and S.B. 1200, would provide desperately needed updates to the state’s antiquated poaching laws. The Humane Society of the United States commends Pennsylvania Game Commission for their efforts to find those responsible for this reprehensible crime.”

The individual or individuals responsible for this possible crime could face charges of unlawful taking or possession of wildlife, a crime punishable by a fine of up to \$1,500. If the investigation yields evidence of commercial poaching, charges of unlawful sale of wildlife, with a fine of up to \$1,500, could also apply.

### **Poaching:**

- S.B. 1200, currently awaiting action in the House Appropriations Committee, would allow Pennsylvania to join the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, a nationwide law enforcement network aimed at keeping poachers who have lost their hunting privileges in one state from hunting in another. Since its institution in 1989, 34 states, including Ohio, Maryland, West Virginia and New York, have joined the Compact.
- Pennsylvania has some of the weakest penalties for poaching in the country. H.B. 1859, legislation currently awaiting action in the state Senate, would increase penalties for a wide range of wildlife crimes, from killing endangered species to operating commercial poaching operations. It also elevates habitual poaching to a felony and for the first time imposes the possibility of jail time for many wildlife crimes.
- Wildlife officials estimate that for every wild animal killed legally — tens of millions of animals per year — another is killed illegally.

- Every year, thousands of poachers are arrested nationwide; however, it is estimated that only 1 percent to 5 percent of poachers are caught.
- Poachers kill wildlife anytime, anywhere and sometimes do so in particularly cruel ways.
- The HSUS works with state wildlife agencies to offer rewards of \$2,500 for information leading to arrest and conviction of suspected poachers.

**The Investigators:**

Anyone with information about this case is asked to call the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s South Central Regional Office at (814) 643-1831 or Turn in a Poacher (TIP) hotline at 1-888-742-8001. Callers may remain anonymous.

**The HSUS Media Contact:**

Liz Bergstrom, 240-751-0659, [ebergstrom@humanesociety.org](mailto:ebergstrom@humanesociety.org)

The HSUS works to curb poaching across the country. Visit [humanesociety.org/poaching](http://humanesociety.org/poaching) for more information.

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*The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization — backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — On the Web at [humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org).*

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*Since 1993 the Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust, alone or in partnership with other conservation groups, has participated in the protection of more than 1.8 million acres of wildlife habitat in 37 states, including 172 acres in Pennsylvania, and eight foreign countries. On all properties owned by the Trust or protected by the Trust's conservation easement, both here and abroad, we prohibit recreational and commercial hunting and trapping and restrict logging and development. The Trust's commitment to these principles will never change as we continue to assist caring landowners to make their property permanent, safe homes for wildlife. Join our online community at [wildlifelandtrust.org](http://wildlifelandtrust.org).*

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**The Humane Society of the United States**  
 2100 L Street, N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20037  
[humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org)

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