

Photography

Photographs are vital to help animal protection organisations communicate their cause and can be a powerful asset, inspiring people to engage with the organisation.

As well as being an easy way to communicate complex messages, photos can generate a wide range of emotions ranging from sympathy to anger and sadness to joy. This is critical when trying to create awareness and influence opinions.

This document discusses how to obtain the best photos, and how to use them to communicate your organisation's work.

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Your camera

Digital versus film

If possible, you should use a digital camera for taking photos. This allows you to quickly view and assess your images, download them to your computer and send them to other people. Film requires time and money to develop, and many film developers deliver poor quality scanned digital images. Digital is much easier to control and is always in your possession. Remember, when purchasing a digital camera, always read the manual and learn how it works before you start to take photos.

Image size and resolution

It is important that photos are taken on the highest possible resolution setting on your digital camera. Photos should ideally be 20cm at its longest point at 300dpi. A digital camera should have several choices on image size in the menu; you're looking for Large Format, 15MB or more, and any other option that makes your photos as large as possible. This will make the photograph usable in all media, from web to publications.

Low resolution images may appear fine on a computer screen, but are useless if printed.

Higher resolution images do limit the number of photos your memory card can hold, but it is essential for quality photographs. When emailing images, make sure that you do not shrink the size of the image if the other person needs to use the image in a publication.

If the image is for PowerPoint, web, or the other person only needs to see the image without using it, then you can email it as a smaller file.

Date Option

If your digital camera has a date option (where the day's date appears in the corner), turn it off. The date is recorded in the image's data and does not need to be seen on the photo. Publications and webmasters do not like photos with visible dates, and someone must spend extra time to remove them if they appear.

Taking Photos

Good photography requires thought and care. When taking a photo it is wise to spend some time setting up the shot before you take it. The following are the main factors to consider:

Angle

Different angles can add more originality and make your image more interesting. Move above, below and close up. Use steps, ladders, rocks, trees or anything available to get higher. Crouch down or lie on your stomach to get lower.

Proximity

Assuming it's safe to do so, get as close as you can to your subject and the action occurring. Most amateur photographs are taken too far away and it lessens the impact of the image.

Flash

Using a flash is not just for dark situations, try using your flash during the day as well. A flash can help in sunlight when the light is bright, but shadows are harsh. Take one image with flash and one without and note the difference it makes.

Thinking Ahead

If your organisation uses 'before and after' images of animals it has helped, then be sure to photograph animals both before they have received their treatment and again after they have fully recovered. If a sanctuary is to be built, photograph the site before, during and after the work is done. If a young wild animal has come into your care and will one day be released into the wild, document its stay from beginning to end. These sorts of images help tell a story, and they are all excellent examples of what donors enjoy seeing, and also help them understand how their donations are spent.

Professional Help

Know when to hire a professional photographer. If your next project is important to your organization and you plan on using the images for a campaign or for media releases, consider hiring a photographer to go with you. If you decide to do this, ensure that you have the appropriate paperwork regarding copyright, usage, terms and agreements.

Make sure the photographer is familiar with your branding and ethical guidelines and will focus on the types of images you require. Discuss fees beforehand and do not be afraid to ask for cheaper rates. Non profit organisations are usually granted special consideration. Be sure no hidden costs exist and that all facets of the photo project are discussed with the photographer, e.g. travel, hotels, food, equipment, daily rates, etc.

If photography is a major asset to your organization, consider hiring a part-time photographer or sending staff or volunteers on photography courses to sharpen their skills instead of continually hiring external photographers.

Managing your photos

Documentation

Once you've taken your photos, make sure you record the date, location, activity, people involved, and any other additional information that will help identify your images. Alert your entire organization that the images exist and are available for use. Be prepared to make CDs or send a few through email to those who want them. Send the image information every time so that everyone is aware of their origin and context.

Copyright

Copyright concerns the right to authorise or restrict the making of copies of an image. Once an image is taken, it is automatically protected under copyright law and belongs to the photographer or the organisation they work for, depending on their employment contract.

The owner of a photo's copyright has the legal right to allow or disallow the distribution of the photo, can ask for payment for its use by others, and should give permission before it to be used by anyone else. Remember that while anyone using your image without permission is in violation of copyright law, any image belonging to someone else that your organisation uses without their permission is also in violation of copyright law. Penalties for breaking copyright law vary from country to country.

Here are some useful tips to ensure that you use and distribute images safely:

- Keep track of who you give your images to.
- Keep track of the images bought by your organization and those that are donated by others.
- Make sure that you keep a file of all contracts, terms and agreements and copyright information that accompany an outside image. The image will always belong to the copyright holder, regardless of how many people it's lent to. It's important to know the owner's terms on how the image can be used.
- Consider creating user agreements for hired photographers and donors to sign when giving you a photograph. This will protect you and your organisation from any possible legal action, should the photographer or picture donor contest your usage. Without this paperwork, it's your word against theirs.
- If you purchase an image to use from a photo library or similar source, make sure you use the image only as specified in the agreement. Do not keep the image for future use on other projects. If you wish to use the photo again, contact the photo library and renegotiate its use.
- Never distribute an image to third parties that does not belong to you or your organization. This is an instant copyright violation against the image's owner. If a third party wants the image and wishes to acquire it, refer them to the image's owner, who can distribute it as they see fit.

Representation

What Your Photos Mean to Your Organization

Values and Identity

Most animal welfare organisations have ethical codes on a range of issues: staff conduct in the field, animal handling and treatment, standard veterinary practices, vegetarianism, etc. It is vital that the images representing your organization also represent the ethics it values. For example, if your organisation values professionalism and expertise in their field, then it should use images that show vets working diligently with proper medical equipment and unemotional interactions between people and animals. Images depicting cuddling with wild animals and unsafe contact with wild animals would be strictly avoided. Another example is if an organisation promotes vegetarianism, it is important that no staff member eat meat products when a camera is present.

In certain circumstances it is very appropriate to use strong graphic images which accurately portray the animal problems you are working on. However the use of such photos should be carefully considered.

The photos you use should reflect the type of organisation you are. Some organisations choose to take a confrontational approach, naming and shaming instances of animal cruelty, and their messages reflect this often using very strong, graphic photographs. This approach raises the profile of issues but could easily alienate the target audience.

Other organisations choose to adopt more of a collaborative approach using negotiation, through working with stakeholders, authorities and communities to push for change. The public use of graphic shaming photographs by these sorts of organisations could be counterproductive and can often have a negative impact on relationships with stakeholders.

Tact and Impact

Animal welfare organisations have a unique situation when it comes to depicting animal cruelty and neglect. Your organisation should have a very clear idea on how much violence it's willing to illustrate in its work. You should also consider if the photos you use depict blame on humans and decide if that's necessarily what you want. Too much violence can distress your audience and inhibit their willingness to listen to your underlying message. Too much blame on humans can create defensiveness and resentment in your audience, and in group-specific blame, it can ruin relationships that could have helped end the problem. Try to strike a balance between the impact you want to make with tact and respect for your audience.

If you are producing a report on a specific animal welfare problem, it is important that the report's imagery accurately portrays the suffering, neglect or illegalities involved to help educate stakeholders or other members of the animal welfare movement. However, your organization may want to consider limiting such imagery from mass messages to supporters, consumers and the general public. In order to get your message across, your intended audience should be able to consider your imagery carefully. Gratuitous violence and blood in photographs can alienate the public, inspiring disgust instead of

compassion. The image must convey the problem, but also show restraint. A good example is the 'before and after' images mentioned above. Many 'before' images show ugly injuries and illnesses that on their own might be hard for members of the public to handle. But when coupled with an 'after' image where the animal is clearly in good health and has fully recovered, the emotions triggered in the audience are relief, gladness and empathy. This is not to suggest that all violent or unpleasant images must be accompanied by a happy counterpart, but careful planning and restraint can prove more effective in winning your audience's attention.

Research

All organisations want their imagery to make a difference. If you are aware of other organizations that have done this successfully, look at their publications and websites and determine why their visual representations work so well. Pinpoint what kind of images they use and why they make such an impact. You'll have a better idea of what kind of images to take for your own organisation.

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Obtaining or buying photos

If you need to buy images and aren't sure where to go, there are thousands of online photo libraries that give good deals to non profit organisations. Depending on your budget and location, here are a few reliable sources:

www.istockphoto.com	A great site of cheap, royalty-free images.
www.nhpa.co.uk	A UK-based site dedicated to animal and conservation images.
www.naturepl.co.uk	A UK-based site dedicated to animal and conservation images.
www.rspb-images.com	Covers a range of mainly UK wildlife with a focus on birds.
www.seapics.com	A Hawaii-based site with a prolific selection of marine imagery.
www.alamy.com	The world's largest online collection of stock photography.
www.rexfeatures.com	Represents a collection of different stock photography companies.
www.ardea.com	A UK-based site dedicated to animal and conservation images.
www.gettyimages.com	An enormous supplier of all things visual.
www.paphotos.com	A stock image library with a photojournalistic theme.
www.pictures.reuters.com	Reuters news agency has a great selection of photojournalistic imagery.

**The World Society for the Protection of Animals
89 Albert Embankment London SE1 7TP
United Kingdom**

**Phone +44 (0)20 7587 5000 Fax +44 (0) 20 7793 0208
Email wspa@wspa-international.org**