

A Comparison of Rabbit Welfare: The SPCA and the District of North Vancouver

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The welfare of companion rabbits is of increasing concern in our communities and the numbers of individuals and organizations asking that the BC SPCA take more of a leadership role in establishing greater awareness and improved standards of humane care has also risen.

In November of 2004 SPCA management accepted and installed 12 inadequate sized lab cages donated by UBC, knowing full well that this would cause an uproar, which indeed it did. See Animal Advocates:

<http://animaladvocates.com/cgi-bin/newsroom.pl/read/9941>

An SPCA volunteer then posted a response stating that they "were put in as a temporary measure" and that a fund raiser was being organized in the summer so that "new cages can be provided." Well, it's been over a year now and the cages have not been replaced. In the meantime the problem of abandoned and relinquished rabbits is totally out of control. As it states in the SPCA's 2006 winter issue of 'Bark!' "in some shelters we have more small animals than cats and dogs!" This is definitely true of the Vancouver branch. On a recent visit 11 out of the 12 lab cages were occupied, all 10 of the bigger cages were full, most with 2 rabbits in each, and an additional 19 tiny cages of assorted small critters were lined up on two shelves. There were over 50 animals in the designated "small animal" room which measures approximately a mere 140 square feet.



Because the volume of strays and surrenders far outnumbers those interested in adopting an adult rabbit something has to be done, and those in the network are often nervous of what the SPCA may do. Excerpt from an email December, 2005:

"I had to remove 4 rabbits from the Van. SPCA shelter today as they were put under death sentence. At the moment, as there are no spaces at the Vancouver SPCA when a stray rabbit comes in - one of the resident rabbits is likely to be euthanized."

There have been numerous offers of help, both financial and otherwise, yet the SPCA is still busy looking into the concerns, reviewing their policies, or investigating the possibilities of new programs and such. It's time for action.

And yes, there is space available to set up a community room for the rabbits with adequate housing.



The District of North Vancouver's animal shelter has both an indoor and outdoor play area for the rabbits, thus ensuring they are provided with proper exercise. Perhaps one day the SPCA will lead with moving the animal agenda forward, rabbits included, but at this time I don't see it as the yardstick by which we can measure animal welfare.



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