

# **BC SPCA COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Presented by the Independent Panel**

**Marguerite Vogel, Chair**

**Panel members**

**Hon. Kim Husband**

**Mike Woodworth**

**Dr. Ken Langelier, D.V.M.**

**Joan McArthur-Blair**

**3 November 2001**

## **BC SPCA COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Executive Summary 1*

*Enforcement of the PCA Act 5*

*Animal Shelters 9*

*Volunteerism 14*

*Pet Overpopulation 16*

*Education 20*

*Animal Control 22*

*Feral Cats 25*

*Agricultural Animals 27*

*Wildlife 30*

*Animals in Entertainment 33*

*Exotic Species 35*

*First Nations 37*

*Accountability 39*

*Advocacy 41*

*Human/Animal Bond 43*

*Appendix – Summary of Recommendations 46*

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Background**

On June 1, 2001 the BC SPCA launched a community consultation throughout the province to seek input on animal welfare issues and to assist the Society to define its future role. The stated objective of the consultation was to engage British Columbians – critics as well as supporters – in constructive dialogue that would lead to a new publicly supported model of animal care and protection in BC.

The consultation process was led by an independent panel chaired by Marguerite Vogel, the current President of the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada, and Director of the Western and Territories Region of the Canadian Radio-television and telecommunication Commission. Also on the panel was the Honourable Kim Husband who, until this past

summer, served for twenty-three years as Provincial Court Judge. Local panelists joined the independent panel in three regions of the province – Mike Woodworth, News Director for CKPG-TV in Prince George, Dr. Ken Langelier, D.V.M., Island Veterinary Hospital in Nanaimo, and Joan McArthur- Blair, Vice-President, Vancouver Community College in Vancouver. These panelists attended the public hearing in their cities and contributed a local perspective to the proceedings.

The public consultation process took place between June and October of this year and proceeded in three stages:

### **1. Submissions**

The BC SPCA invited members of the public, volunteers, staff, municipalities and groups with a special interest in animal welfare to offer their feedback through written submissions, emails, faxes and through a special 1-800 number. To assist people to engage in the consultation, the BC SPCA proposed a number of topics on which participants could comment. These topics were published on the BC SPCA website, in brochures and posters that were distributed to all staff and volunteers and communities across the province. Paid advertisements and media coverage also publicized the community consultation.

### **2. Deliberative Dialogues**

As part of the public consultation process, the BC SPCA trained staff and volunteers in a process called deliberative dialogue. This process encourages people to reach common ground on issues or problems in a way that is collaborative and positive rather than confrontational. Three deliberative dialogues were held on enforcement of the PCA Act, with a focus on how the BC SPCA could be more effective in enforcing anti-cruelty laws. Dialogue participants included representatives from: BC SPCA field operations, animal care and education; the legal and law enforcement professions; the City of Vancouver, and concerned citizens. A deliberative dialogue with BC SPCA staff and volunteers and members of local animal rescue groups was also held on pet overpopulation. Recommendations from these dialogues have been integrated into the Community Consultation Summary Report and Recommendations (the report).

### **3. Public Hearings**

Public hearings were held in six locations in BC – Prince George, Victoria, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Vancouver and Chilliwack. In each location, the panel toured the local shelter and met with staff and board members to discuss their work and the particular animal welfare challenges in their region. In the afternoon and evening, the panel listened to presentations from members of the public who came to express their views.

Certain topics emerged as areas of key importance, drawing high numbers of submissions. For example, the role of Animal Shelters, Enforcement of the PCA Act and Pet Overpopulation account for approximately 35% of submissions, with Animal Shelters drawing the strongest response. Feedback regarding Education and Animal Control issues account for approximately 25% of submissions. Comments pertaining to Feral Cats, Wildlife, Agricultural Animals, Accountability and Advocacy account for another 25%, and the remaining 15% address First Nations, Human-Animal Bond, Animals in Entertainment and Exotic Species.

## **Observations and Themes**

In total more than a thousand people took part in this community consultation. The independent panel found the quality of submissions impressive. Most participants provided informed and constructive feedback on a range of issues. There was a remarkable similarity in feedback throughout the province, regardless of region. Several themes emerged in both written and oral submissions.

There are voices of dissent. But even dissenters believe the BC SPCA should continue to be the primary animal protection agency in BC. There is also a great deal of goodwill among donors and volunteers. However, their collective sense of trust and confidence needs to be restored and the BC SPCA can only accomplish this by taking action in areas where critics see shortcomings.

The public expects the BC SPCA to live up to its name. It is the view of the panel that initiatives that increase the BC SPCA's ability to prevent cruelty to, and promote animal welfare of animals should be pursued vigorously and transparently. Initiatives, however, that detract from, or drain resources or energy from this mission should be discontinued as soon as possible.

The public is deeply disturbed about the conditions of animals that need protection – from tethered dogs to animals at auction. They believe that in enforcing the PCA Act, the BC SPCA has taken a baseline approach to care – adequate food water and shelter – and has not considered the psychological needs of animals in its interpretation of the Act's neglect provisions. The panel has formulated a number of specific recommendations focused on strengthening enforcement of anti-cruelty statutes. A key recommendation is that the BC SPCA creates internal species-specific standards and definitions by which it will enforce the Act. Integral to this recommendation is that the BC SPCA defines what constitutes “neglect” with more precision. There is serious concern over the condition of BC SPCA animal shelters, the level of care provided to shelter animals and the attitude and performance of staff. The panel traveled to six regions of the province and could see that there is a pool of talented and dedicated staff and volunteers. However, the panel was also disturbed by the wide disparity in the resources available to branches in different parts of the province, and the inconsistencies in the care of shelter animals and in operational practices.

It is clear that the BC SPCA needs to apply higher and more consistent standards of animal care at its shelters and provide more services than are currently offered. In particular, the panel sees room for a lot of improvement in the housing of shelter animals, in levels of customer service, and in adoption procedures. The Society must, in the very near term, address the substandard condition of some of its older shelters.

The concept of no-kill shelters was brought up in submissions, but it became clear that the term no-kill needed definition. No-kill shelters, in many cases, means “not killed here”. In fact, animals are still killed but not on shelter premises. The panel believes that no kill shelters, if taken literally, may be in conflict with the humane treatment of some animals. The BC SPCA's goal should be that no adoptable animal will be euthanized.

The role of volunteers is a subject that surfaced throughout the submissions. There is genuine concern on the part of volunteers for the humane treatment of shelter animals.

Volunteers are willing and ready to work in a more collaborative relationship with shelter staff. However, it appears that they are often discouraged in their efforts to integrate into the organization. Volunteers are a valuable resource and one that the BC SPCA needs in order to survive. It is clear that the Society has to do a much better job of integrating volunteers into its branches. The panel recommends that improved recruitment, screening and training of both staff and volunteers be established at all shelters. A commitment on the part of staff and volunteers to applying best practices in the care of shelter animals must be consistent and the norm.

The BC SPCA's role in animal control emerged as another area of concern. It is evident from submissions to the community consultation that the BC SPCA's reputation has suffered because the public perceives that the Society has put the business of animal control ahead of animal welfare. For many, animal control is in direct conflict with the BC SPCA's mission. It is the view of the independent panel that municipalities should handle animal control since they enact the by-laws that regulate, control and license animals. The independent panel recommends that the Society should seriously consider getting out of animal control as contracts expire and put additional resources into prevention of cruelty, education and advocacy – the foundation of its mission.

The public is deeply troubled by the number of surplus and unwanted animals and they want the BC SPCA to work harder to reduce pet overpopulation. They are calling on the BC SPCA to spay/neuter all shelter animals prior to adoption and to apply improved animal assessment and adoption procedures in an effort to promote pet retention. The panel supports these views and also recommends a greater focus on educational initiatives covering all aspects of responsible pet ownership. The panel suggests that the BC SPCA shouldn't try to do all that needs to be done by itself. Rather, the Society needs to seek out specialists and form alliances with them to prevent cruelty to all species.

There is much to gain by strengthening partnerships with other animal welfare groups, with local veterinarians, with law enforcement agencies and with municipalities.

Underpinning all submissions is a unified appeal by the public for the BC SPCA to provide much more education – in schools at all levels, through the media, videos, the website, and at all SPCA shelters. The panel believes that education should be of the highest priority in the BC SPCA's work. Failure to prevent cruelty is costly in terms of harm to the very animals the Society seeks and is obliged to protect, and in terms of the costs involved in prosecuting offenders. Education is by far the best means of promoting animal welfare and preventing cruelty to animals

### **Organization of the report**

The report is organized topically. Under each topic we describe the issue, give a summary of public feedback and articulate the independent panel's recommendations. A table summarizing the recommendations is included as an appendix to the report. Although the recommendations may appear to be focused on dogs and cats, other species should be read in as being included in general recommendations. Recommendations are identified as urgent (next 3 to 6 months), short-term (next six months to one year) and long-term (beyond one year). In terms of these time frames – the panel intends that the

recommendations be started in that time frame – not necessarily completed. It is up to the BC SPCA to develop strategic action plans to carry out specific recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

The Community Consultation Summary Report is based on public feedback. The feedback from the consultation is unlike a scientific survey because it is largely anecdotal. The responses do not constitute a “representative sample” in scientific research terms. However, the feedback is crucially important to the BC SPCA because it identifies and measures expectations that exist in the community.

The public was very appreciative of the opportunity to express their views and concerns. They were grateful that the BC SPCA was willing to listen to them. They invested much time, thought and energy in making submissions and they intend to hold the BC SPCA accountable.

The panel believes that the BC SPCA can win back public support by taking concrete action in response to the recommendations. It is the panel’s view that the recommendations are reasonable and achievable.

Once the Society develops its action plan, the panel recommends that the BC SPCA undertake a communications campaign to explain what the Society is, what it stands for and how it relates to the needs of the community. Keep the Society’s supporters informed.

The panel extends its deep appreciation for being invited to serve the BC SPCA and the community in this very important process.

## **ENFORCEMENT OF THE PCA ACT**

### **The Issue**

BC SPCA Special Provincial Constables, have the power to investigate cruelty allegations under both the provincial Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA Act) and the Criminal Code of Canada. Evidence is gathered and presented to Crown who then determines if a case will be prosecuted. Most people would agree that people should not be cruel to animals - that is, to cause an animal to suffer pain or injury, or bring about harm or distress through neglect. But, having said that, there are issues and concerns:

⇒ Some people have noted that while the BC SPCA has the power to investigate cruelty, it is not required to do so.

⇒ The laws need to apply to all, yet personal standards differ. While some consider dogs to be members of the family, others view allowing a dog inside a family home as culturally or aesthetically inappropriate.

⇒ The BC SPCA’s enforcement of the Act has focused on minimum physical care - up to now the BC SPCA has not considered the psychological needs of animals in its interpretation of the Act's neglect provisions. As well applied definitions of neglect and distress are inconsistent.

⇒ While the Society receives \$72,000 annually from the provincial government for enforcement of the PCA Act, donations fund most of the cost of training and deployment of our 90 BC SPCA Special Provincial Constables.

In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA asked a number of questions. Key among them was whether the BC SPCA is meeting public expectations, its mandate and the needs of

neglected and abused animals in its current approach to the enforcement of the anti-cruelty statutes. Input was also sought regarding the PCA Act and whether it is adequate to protect all animals and whether the term “neglect” is being interpreted appropriately.

### **Public Feedback**

The majority of submissions, both oral and written, are critical of the Society’s current approach to enforcing provisions against cruelty. Clearly, those who have made submissions with respect to the Act (over 150) expect the BC SPCA to do much more in meeting the needs of neglected and abused animals. The common complaint is that the BC SPCA has adopted the lowest possible standards when interpreting the PCA Act. While many remark that they have filed complaints regarding animal neglect and abuse, often the BC SPCA’s response is that there is nothing it can do if the animal in question has adequate food, water and shelter.

Many accuse the BC SPCA of hiding behind a law that is ineffective, stating that the Act should have clear language that the BC SPCA is obligated to investigate cruelty. These submissions go on to say that the BC SPCA must be more actively involved in preventing cruelty, not waiting until an animal has completely deteriorated and may be beyond help. Furthermore, submissions suggest that the BC SPCA should be lobbying for stronger legislation that enables it take firm action in cases of neglect, as well as for legislation that recognizes animals as sentient beings and not chattel. It is noted that the BC SPCA needs to take a more proactive and aggressive approach to enforcement taking on cases that push the boundaries.

Several submissions cite cases of tied-up dogs who spend their entire lives at the end of a rope without social interaction or exercise and often without adequate food, shelter or water. In their view, such cases constitute extreme cruelty and neglect on both a physical and emotional level. Many want to see people aggressively charged, prosecuted and if found guilty, imprisoned for such neglect and abuse, and be prohibited from having animals in the future.

Most submissions strongly suggest that the BC SPCA is not interpreting or applying the neglect provision of the Act at all. Some point out that the BC SPCA has the power to more broadly interpret the neglect provision of the Act to include both physical and emotional neglect and abuse.

One submission states:

“How is it that neglect, while included in the Act as a definition of distress has been made invisible by the BC SPCA? The dictionary defines the word neglect as 1. to ignore or disregard, 2. to fail to attend to properly, 3. to leave undone –n, 1. a neglecting, 2. lack of proper care, 3. a being neglected – adj. There does not seem to be any doubt in my mind that the ability to deal with neglect has been available to the BC SPCA, but, for whatever reason, the choice has been made to overlook it.”

Submissions note that the BC SPCA is not being a true advocate for the individuals they serve, resulting in other activist groups stepping up to fill the gap, i.e. Animal Advocates Society, Furbearers Association, Meow Aid, Greater Victoria Animal Crusaders, The Responsible Animal Care Society, and Horse Protection Society. Many recommend stronger cruelty enforcement of the Act with respect to rodeos, farm animals, animals at auction, the fur industry and animals used for entertainment purposes. Many submissions

recommend that the provincial government fund enforcement of the Act since it is their act.

As part of the community consultation process, the BC SPCA held three Deliberative Dialogues concerning enforcement of the PCA Act. Deliberative Dialogue is based on values and finding common ground in seeking solutions. Dialogue participants included representatives of the legal and law enforcement professions, as well as representation from the City of Vancouver and employees of the BC SPCA who work in Field Operations, Animal Welfare, Education and Public Relations. This group put forward a number of recommendations that have been integrated into the overall recommendations of the independent panel.

### **Recommendations**

After review of all submissions -- oral and written -- it is the view of the panel that the BC SPCA has not kept up with public expectations regarding the prevention of cruelty and enforcement of key provisions in the Act. There is a great deal of anger towards the BC SPCA, with the public asking it to investigate and act on complaints of neglect. The perception is that the BC SPCA is only enforcing a baseline approach to care – adequate food, water and shelter.

The public wants the BC SPCA to reflect the changing values of society. This includes recognizing animals as sentient beings with both physical and psychological needs. In saying this, the panel believes that the BC SPCA has broad discretion with respect to its interpretation of the Act. The Act itself may not need to change. However, the BC SPCA needs to create internal species-specific standards and definitions by which it will enforce the Act. A first step would be to more closely define what constitutes distress, particularly the third branch of the definition – “neglect”. Neglect is not defined in the Act but should include, at least, social isolation, stress, lack of exercise, and cleanliness of surroundings.

A more comprehensive definition could be included in revised animal care guidelines. Investigations would be based not on the likelihood of the court proceeding with a charge, but on whether the standards of care set out in the BC SPCA’s animal care guidelines are being met.

We are of the view that prosecution is the failure of prevention. We recommend that the BC SPCA put a stronger focus on education, as a means of preventing cruelty. The BC SPCA needs to raise the bar on what steps it requires animal guardians to take to prevent or relieve distress.

In terms of building cases, we recommend that more training of Special Provincial Constables is necessary to ensure proper investigative and evidence-gathering procedures are adhered to. The goal would be to bring forward some very strong cases and begin to build a body of case law. At the Deliberative Dialogues, it was noted by staff participants that Special Provincial Constables are willing to push the boundaries – but will need more tools and training to do so. However, insufficient resources are not the only impediment in bringing cases forward. It is well known that the Crown is overburdened and it is difficult to convince them that cases involving animals should have a priority. Therefore, it is imperative that the BC SPCA develop a liaison with Crown counsel to learn what they need to build and prosecute cases, and how the BC SPCA can better educate the Crown on its animal care standards. We point out that while the interpretation

of the statute is ultimately the task of the Crown and the Courts, it is the BC SPCA's role, in practical terms, to determine what the terms used in the PCA Act's definition of distress mean.

The panel also recommends that the BC SPCA develop a process that allows the public to track and measure the effectiveness of cruelty investigations.

***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

***Urgent***

- ⇒ Create a work group to revise the current "Animal Care Guidelines" to reflect specific needs for all animals based on the 'five freedoms'\* and to include more detailed language regarding the definition of "neglect".
- ⇒ Establish two to three Special Provincial Constables in each of the 12 proposed regions as experts in investigation and case law procedures.
- ⇒ Establish an "Animal Case Law Work Group" to develop a liaison with the Crown, with the objective of conducting successful prosecutions that will build case law to support future cruelty prosecutions.

***Short-term***

- ⇒ Develop species-specific "Animal Care Guidelines" for animals such as dogs, cats, horses, farm animals
- ⇒ Provide "Animal Care Guidelines" to all new animal guardians as a covenant/adoption agreement by which they will be measured; leave the guidelines behind when investigating a cruelty complaint and provide guidelines to municipalities to distribute when licensing dogs.
- ⇒ Mount public awareness and education campaigns focusing on responsible animal care.

***Long-term***

- ⇒ Develop an accountability process so the public can track the effectiveness of cruelty investigations.
- ⇒ Lobby Provincial Government to contribute more funds toward enforcement of the Act.

***Ongoing***

- ⇒ Provide ongoing training in investigative procedures through the Justice Institute to all BC SPCA Special Provincial Constables.
- ⇒ Provide ongoing internal training to Special Provincial Constables and other staff regarding enforcement of revised "Animal Care Guidelines".

***\*Five Freedoms***

- Freedom from fear and distress
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom to express normal behaviour



## **ANIMAL SHELTERS**

### **The Issue**

BC SPCA animal shelters are facilities where animals are housed and cared for when surrendered by owners, found homeless or seized because they were abused or neglected. Shelters are also adoption centres and some serve as municipal pounds. Municipalities own some BC SPCA shelters, while the BC SPCA owns others. The BC SPCA recognizes that some of the facilities that it operates in are very old and run down, while others are newer and provide a higher degree of comfort to the animals while being more inviting to the public.

In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA asked the public for comments and suggestions regarding what shelters should look like, what services they should offer and where they should be located? The public was also invited to comment on other issues including the quality of life of shelter animals, and how to deal with animals who have behavioural problems or who spend long periods in shelters.

### **Public Feedback**

The public expects the BC SPCA to provide the highest level of care and comfort for animals in shelters, and states that the BC SPCA should be “at the forefront of how to humanely house and treat animals” . Ideally the public would like to see centrally located shelters (or at least easily accessible by transit) that are spacious, bright and inviting, with friendly well-trained staff and volunteers. Higher standards in customer service are strongly recommended; many cited poor customer service standards where staff is rude to the public and volunteers.

In addition to serving as prime adoption centres, submissions suggest the BC SPCA shelters should offer an array of services: off-leash areas, communal cat areas instead of solitary cages, heated floors and beds for dogs, grooming services, get acquainted rooms, training classes and humane education materials. Many submissions recommend that BC SPCA shelters should have more flexible hours including evening hours to allow people who work during the day to visit and adopt animal companions. It is noted that in smaller centres, shelters are closed on Saturday and/or Sunday, which are the only days some people are able to visit the shelters.

There is concern, particularly on the part of volunteers, for the health of the animals brought into the shelter and whether adequate medical intervention and treatment is provided. Some cite animals lying sick and unattended for days or even weeks. Several volunteers point out that they are more than willing to participate in the care and comfort of the animals but they are given very limited opportunity and encouragement to get involved. Many submissions are highly critical regarding the state of the BC SPCA’s current shelters, particularly in the Lower Mainland. Several comment on substandard conditions and questionable practices at Langley, Coquitlam and Maple Ridge. Methods of euthanasia and the appropriateness of the attitude of some staff who carry it out are questioned.

There is also a great deal of criticism leveled at the Victoria Branch. Many submissions highlight the poor attitude of staff and their seemingly uncaring attitude toward animals. Victoria is also noted as a branch that has employed questionable euthanasia practices (use of the gas box), as well as being inattentive to the health of animals in their care.

Several submissions point out that the Victoria branch does not utilize the Spay Neuter Action Plan (SNAP) program and that the hospital is underutilized.

Some submissions suggest that the BC SPCA animal hospitals should return to their original purpose – to provide low-cost spay and neuter and other services to animal guardians with low income. In terms of adoption, volunteers recommend that profiles of animals be developed and posted with the animal, and that this information should travel with the animal when it is transferred between shelters. Other submissions suggest that primary care givers be designated to work on a consistent basis with shelter animals to more accurately assess behaviour, behavioural changes and improvements. To ensure successful adoptions and fewer returns, many strongly recommend better adoption screening procedures and adoption follow-up and support services. A 1-800 number is mentioned as a possible means of providing support and information to animal guardians. The majority of submissions suggest that measures be taken to rehabilitate problem shelter animals. Recommendations include using behavioural specialists to help in the assessment and retraining of these animals. Submissions continue to say that problem animals are the result of bad owners and every effort should be made to give these animals another chance, citing that is a rare animal that must be euthanized due to behaviour issues. Some submissions recommend it would be better to euthanize animals that are assessed to have untreatable behavioural problems. However, it is noted that the term untreatable needs to be defined.

To provide consistent, stable training and care, the public supports fostering shelter animals with behavioural problems or animals who have been in the shelter for several months.

Fostering is also recommended for animals that are ill or injured, for abandoned kittens and puppies and when shelters are full. In general, the public believes the BC SPCA should not turn away any animal since people will often opt for abandonment or inhumane disposal as the alternative. No-kill shelters were mentioned in submissions. Some suggested that striving for no-kill should be the ultimate goal of the BC SPCA. Others noted that having no animals ever euthanized at a shelter is unrealistic.

### **Recommendations**

The operation of the BC SPCA's animal shelters is a hot topic, with the public expecting much higher standards and more services than those currently in place. After reviewing over 170 submissions addressing animal shelters, the independent panel is clear that a number of changes are needed to ensure that BC SPCA shelters are seen to be at the forefront of how to humanely house and treat animals.

Overall, we believe the BC SPCA needs to improve standards of care of shelter animals, improve animal assessment and adoption procedures, and radically improve the way in which it welcomes and serves the public. To save and re-home more animals, fostering programs should be implemented at all shelters. We recommend that improvements to customer service be implemented in the near term. As Mike Woodworth, local panel member in Prince George, states – “staffing, volunteer and training objectives must be established for all shelters with a commitment to applying best practices in the care of shelter animals”. Volunteers are one of the BC SPCA's greatest resources and it is imperative that a cooperative relationship between staff and volunteers be actively pursued.

A number of our recommendations focus on staff and operational procedures, as well as the role of volunteers. In the Lower Mainland and Victoria, where staff is unionized, it is apparent that there is often a strained relationship between staff and volunteers. In many submissions, both written and oral, volunteers voice their willingness and desire to work in closer partnership with shelter staff – in providing assistance with adoption counseling, animal assessment, fostering programs, dog walking and grooming, cat care programs and in the development of new programs focused on improving animal welfare. The genuine concern on the part of volunteers for the humane treatment of shelter animals simply cannot be ignored. We strongly recommend that the BC SPCA do a better job of integrating volunteers into its branches.

We highly recommend that the BC SPCA re-visit its plan to build a state-of-the-art shelter in the Lower Mainland with an eye to closing some of its older facilities. This shelter would then serve as the model for future BC SPCA regional shelters. In the interim, the BC SPCA should upgrade the facilities it owns and encourage municipalities to bring their facilities up to BC SPCA recommended standards. We believe that measurable improvements could be made to the housing and care of animals in all BC SPCA shelters in the very near term.

We do not believe that it is realistic for the BC SPCA to strive to be no-kill. The panel believes the term “no-kill” often means “not killed here”. The panel believes that no-kill shelters can lead to overcrowding and illness – the result could well be inhumane. The BC SPCA’s goal should be that no adoptable animal will be euthanized.

***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

**Operational Policies and Procedures**

***Urgent***

- ⇒ Commit resources to upgrading older, sub-standard facilities owned by the BC SPCA, and actively encourage municipalities to bring their facilities up to BC SPCA recommended standards.
- ⇒ Establish a centralized Human Resources function to develop standard recruitment policies and programs.
- ⇒ Establish appropriate recruitment screening, interview and evaluation procedures to ensure potential employees and volunteers are well suited to work for an animal welfare society.
- ⇒ Make ongoing training programs that encompass all aspects of shelter operations, including special training in customer service, mandatory.
- ⇒ Improve delivery of euthanasia training to staff using BC SPCA standard methods
- ⇒ Make shelter superintendents/shelter managers responsible and accountable for integrating volunteers into shelter operations in a meaningful, non-threatening way.

***Short-term***

- ⇒ Evaluate customer service levels through a secret shopper system.
- ⇒ Establish specific care guidelines for shelter animals to maintain consistently high standards of cleanliness, consistent healthy diet, blankets and/or beds for dogs, enriched and/or communal cage environments for cats and areas for both dogs and cats to exercise.
- ⇒ Re-evaluate the role of the BC SPCA animal hospitals.

**Long-term**

- ⇒ Re-visit its plan to build a state-of-the-art shelter in the Lower Mainland that would serve as model for new BC SPCA regional shelters.
- ⇒ Make superintendents/shelter managers non-union positions wherever and whenever possible, and where not possible, establish a TIPS line for staff and volunteers so that they can lodge complaints with BC SPCA management without fear of retaliation.

**Adoption Policies and Procedures****Urgent**

- ⇒ Establish a centralized database that can easily profile all adoption animals and keep track of where animals are physically located to ensure when an animal is transported it can be found quickly.

**Short-term**

- ⇒ Promote BC SPCA shelters as community adoption centers; seriously consider expanding adoption viewing hours.
- ⇒ Ensure comprehensive animal profiles are posted on cages/kennels of all shelter animals and that all information (history, behavioural and medical) goes with the animal when it is transferred.
- ⇒ Implement adoption counseling programs at all BC SPCA shelters to help successfully match people to suitable animal companions and to provide information on all aspects of responsible pet care.
- ⇒ Provide adoption follow-up and support services to those who have adopted shelter animals; consider a 1-800 support line.
- ⇒ Establish fostering programs at all BC SPCA shelters for: abandoned and surrendered kittens and puppies; sick, injured and emotionally stressed animals that are not quite ready for adoption; and, any potentially adoptable animals when shelters are full.
- ⇒ Provide humane educational materials and resources to the public, including a comprehensive adoption kit to all new animal guardians: incorporate animal care guidelines and an adoption agreement/covenant.

**Long-term**

- ⇒ Establish standard animal behavioural assessment procedures utilizing the services of qualified animal behaviourists.

**VOLUNTEERISM****The Issue/Public Feedback**

As stated earlier, the role of volunteers within the BC SPCA was a common theme that surfaced in submissions and at public hearings. In particular, the hearings in Vancouver and Victoria had numerous volunteers and former volunteers in attendance. These volunteers expressed anger at how they are treated by staff and their frustration and horror at what they viewed as neglectful and inhumane treatment of animals by BC SPCA staff. The panel is not in the position to judge the truth of such accusations.

However, many of the most angry and vocal people at the public hearings were former

volunteers who have left the BC SPCA. They are now among the people who damage the BC SPCA by writing letters to the editor and by joining activist groups who publicly oppose the BC SPCA. At the same time, there are many committed volunteers who stay on in spite of their discouragement, because they believe it is they who provide the greatest love and care for the animals.

### **Recommendations**

The willingness of volunteers to be involved and make a difference for animals is a valuable resource and, in our view, one the BC SPCA must make better use of. A strong and loyal contingent of volunteers can offer significant support to the BC SPCA in fulfilling its mission.

To this end, we recommend that the BC SPCA commit more resources in developing and training its volunteers. A good example is the Kelowna Branch, where a paid volunteer coordinator has been able to draw and retain a large contingent of volunteers that support all facets of the branch's operations from animal care to fundraising. We recommend that the BC SPCA seriously consider hiring regional volunteer coordinators to recruit and train volunteers and to develop community-based volunteer programs throughout BC. Any additional costs would most likely come back in donor dollars, as communities benefit from expanded services and programs that a healthy volunteer base can help make possible.

We recommend that the BC SPCA pay more attention to how volunteers are integrated into shelter operations. It appears that most staff/volunteer problems are occurring in the Lower Mainland and Victoria where staff is unionized. Joan McArthur-Blair, local panel member in Vancouver, recommends that the BC SPCA actively seek ways of resolving the issues between these groups. She suggests that the BC SPCA conduct focus groups with volunteers and staff to explore the issues further. It would also be useful, she points out, to include the union in redesign and re-formatting of the employee/volunteer relationship.

*Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:*

#### **Urgent**

- ⇒ Commit more resources to volunteer recruitment, management and development.
- ⇒ Develop a plan to hire regional Volunteer Coordinators.

#### **Short-term**

- ⇒ Conduct focus groups with BC SPCA unionized staff and volunteers to resolve issues between these groups.
- ⇒ Work with the union in the redesign of the employee/volunteer relationship.

## **PET OVERPOPULATION**

### **The Issue**

Pet overpopulation remains a serious issue in some BC communities -- more so with cats than dogs. The large numbers of dogs and cats that entered shelters in the 1970's were surplus animals. There were too many animals and not enough homes. Over the past three decades aggressive spay/neuter campaigns have dramatically reduced these numbers. Now most animals - dogs in particular - that enter shelters are "unwanted" animals - animals whose guardians have been unable to take care of them or animals that

have behaviour problems. Finding appropriate homes for these animals is much more challenging.

Often these animals end up back in shelters after short stays within new homes. There remains in many areas of BC, however, a "surplus" of cats and dogs -- particularly in rural areas. There are also people who breed dogs and cats and make them available to the public.

The two biggest problems we face are that pets are easily discarded, resulting in stray dogs and cats, and that litters are produced by free-roaming, unowned feral cat colonies. While spay/neuter programs are important, they alone are not the answer. The BC SPCA could spay/neuter 100% of the animals and still be faced with euthanizing unwanted dogs and cats. There are other factors to consider in reducing the number of animals who end up in shelters. Studies have found that companion animals end up in shelters for the following reasons:

- *behaviour problems*
- *limited access to pet friendly housing*
- *unrealistic expectations about time and cost of pet keeping*
- *animals obtained free of charge*
- *strenuous relationship with pet*

In asking for public feedback, the BC SPCA asked for input on whether the BC SPCA should be legally required to spay/neuter animals before adoption, whether it should advocate for mandatory spay/neuter by-laws, and how best to monitor breeders. The BC SPCA also asked for feedback on how it could raise awareness for the need to spay/neuter companion animals and how it could best deal with unwanted animals at its shelters that have behaviour problems.

### **Public Feedback**

The majority of submissions that address pet overpopulation call on the BC SPCA to spay/neuter all shelter animals prior to adoption. In fact, many people cannot understand why this is not standard practice now. It is important to note that there is no guarantee that spay/neuter certificates supplied by the BC SPCA to new animal guardians are actually used; recent statistics show that approximately 25% of certificates are not used. Many submissions call for the expansion of subsidized spay/neuter programs for people with low incomes and First Nations peoples.

There is broad support for mandatory spay/neuter legislation. In the Lower Mainland seven municipalities have spay/neuter by-laws. However, it is noted that these by-laws are not being enforced actively.

For the most part, there is little support for the breeding of dogs and cats except by reputable purebred breeders. Some submissions call for the BC SPCA to advocate against the sale of animals in pet stores as many come from indiscriminate breeders. It is suggested that kittens and puppies sold through pet stores should be spayed and neutered prior to sale and adoption.

A number of submissions recommend the licensing of registered purebred breeders who would pay a substantial fee for a license to breed. Only licensed breeders would be allowed to breed and keep unaltered animals. Submissions recommend such breeders be regularly inspected by the BC SPCA for the condition of premises, number of animals they breed (high numbers may be cause for neglect or abuse), and for the quality of

screening used with potential adopters. A BC SPCA seal of approval might be developed to identify reputable breeders.

A large number of submissions address the issue of puppy mills, and the need to advocate for tougher legislation that would allow the BC SPCA to seize the animals, heavily penalize the breeders and shut them down. Some accuse the BC SPCA of doing nothing to stop the practice of backyard breeding. It is alleged that many puppies from unscrupulous breeders eventually end up in shelters continuing the cycle of unwanted animals.

Although education is treated separately within this report, suggestions relating to spay/neuter include educating the public through advertising – both soft and hard. Many support education being part of the school curriculum starting at a very early age, with a focus on basic animal care, the importance of spaying/neutering and the responsibility associated with pet ownership.

In terms of unwanted animals at BC SPCA shelters who may have behavioural problems, the public would like to see every effort made to rehabilitate, re-socialize and re-home these animals. Animal assessment programs and volunteer driven fostering programs are recommended to address this issue.

A separate community dialogue was held in August 2001 on pet overpopulation. Several cat rescue groups were represented. It was noted that all of these groups work with local veterinarians in their communities to provide free or low-cost spay/neuters. While the BC SPCA has two clinics, it is understood that it would be challenging to spay/neuter all BC SPCA shelter animals prior to adoption. In this regard, it was suggested that the BC SPCA should seek stronger partnerships with municipalities and veterinarians in an effort to reduce pet overpopulation by increasing the number of community-based spay/neuter programs in British Columbia.

## **Recommendations**

The independent panel recommends that the BC SPCA should take a more proactive role in reducing the number of surplus and unwanted animals. We believe that the BC SPCA could reduce pet overpopulation by implementing a number of key strategies, including the development of new and stronger spay/neuter programs, improved adoption and follow-up programs, fostering programs, advocacy initiatives, education and public awareness campaigns and community partnerships.

We recommend that shelter animals be professionally assessed to determine their temperament and needs. Also, more pre-screening of guardians by qualified adoption counselors (staff and/or volunteers) is recommended to appropriately match the needs of the pet with the guardian, and to ensure the guardian is willing to take on the responsibility of pet ownership. In short, taking the time needed to find the right home for each shelter animal.

As stated, spay/neuter programs alone are not the answer to reducing pet overpopulation. Therefore our recommendations include approaches that focus on both reducing the birth rate and on increasing adoptions at BC SPCA shelters. Some of the recommendations that relate to increasing adoptions have also been noted earlier under Animal Shelters.

***Our specific recommendations call for the BC SPCA to:***

Reduce birth rate

***Urgent***

- ⇒ Lead by example and spay and neuter all shelter animals prior to adoption.
- ⇒ Establish a cooperative, non-competitive relationship with the veterinary community in all regions of BC with an eye to expanding community-based spay neuter programs.
- ⇒ Mount major educational and public awareness campaigns to encourage pet guardians to sterilize their pets; work with municipalities and the veterinary community to deliver responsible pet guardian information.

***Long-term***

- ⇒ Expand spay/neuter assistance for low-income people
- ⇒ Advocate for mandatory spay/neuter by-laws to demonstrate that it is socially unacceptable to have unsterilized pets.
- ⇒ Organize a deliberative dialogue with the Canadian Kennel Club and dog fancier groups and develop an approach to identify and address the problem of indiscriminate breeders.

Increase adoptions-pet retention

***Urgent***

- ⇒ Develop cooperative relationships with other animal rescue/welfare groups such as special breed rescue and feral cat rescue in an effort to rehabilitate, and re-home animals.

***Short-term***

- ⇒ Implement behaviour assessment, adoption counseling, and adoption follow-up programs, as detailed under the recommendations for animal shelters.
- ⇒ Establish fostering programs at all BC SPCA shelters, as detailed under recommendations for animal shelters.

***Ongoing***

- ⇒ Expand satellite adoption centres (Petcetera and Pet Squad) to include more locations and other partners.

**EDUCATION**

**The Issue**

Humane education involves teaching responsible care of animals, raising the level of awareness of animal suffering and cruelty, and educating about how human decisions impact on animals and natural systems. Central to humane education is the development of empathy skills -- the ability to put yourself in the place of others. Humane education also focuses on how people view and treat animals, both historically and cross-culturally.

Further, it includes developing compassionate and caring relationships with animals, promoting critical thinking skills, celebrating the human-animal bond and encouraging respectful relationships between people, animals and nature. In seeking public feedback, the BC SPCA sought input on whether humane education



should be part of the school curriculum, what priority education should have in the BC SPCA's work, and what types of education materials and programs the BC SPCA should offer.

### **Public feedback**

A definite and resounding yes was the overall response to whether education should be part of the school curriculum. In both oral and written submissions it was stated that humane education should be mandatory, starting at pre-school and continuing through to Grade 12.

Starting humane education at a young age is seen as the best means of promoting animal welfare and prevention of cruelty. When children learn appropriate respect for animals as sentient beings this respect extends to all life – people, nature and animals, creating the foundation for more humane communities in the future. Some suggest that children should be exposed to the consequences of animal neglect and abuse by showing them pictures/videos of abused animals. Others note that when children learn something is bad or wrong they take this information home and share it with their parents. For example, when anti-smoking messages are conveyed to children they bring them home, demanding that their parents to quit.

It is also suggested that the prevention of cruelty to animals be part of the post-secondary education curriculum. For instance, in Prince George, the University College of the Cariboo includes an animal welfare component in its Environmental Ethics course. Another submission pointed out that graduates who pursue careers in professional services need more awareness of the indicators of abuse and predictive indicators of future abusers.

The public recommends a range of materials and methods of education, including media campaigns, written materials, videos, website, mall displays with animals, taking animals to the classroom and conducting tours of shelters. Many suggest that BC SPCA animal shelters should serve as humane education resource centres for communities. It is noted that more focus is needed to educate new immigrants about North American standards of humane care and treatment of animals.

Submissions recommend more education on responsible pet ownership with a focus on behaviour and socialization, the importance of population control, mental and physical health and the benefits/costs of having pets. Education regarding the humane treatment of farm animals and wildlife is also cited as important.

### **Recommendations**

The independent panel believes that education should be of the highest priority in the BC SPCA's work. Prosecution is the failure of prevention, and education is by far the best means of promoting animal welfare and preventing animal cruelty. It is essential to introduce humane education at an early age. Our youth are the leaders of tomorrow and our hope for a more humane world.

While we understand that the BC SPCA currently has education materials and programs in place, it is our view that more focus and resources need to be committed to this area. In fact, we see education as the foundation of the BC SPCA's work since success of all its efforts depends on an informed, educated public.

***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

#### ***Short-term***

- ⇒ Create broader understanding and awareness of animal welfare issues through compelling media, advertising and advocacy campaigns.
- ⇒ Develop a broad range of educational materials and provide at all BC SPCA animal shelters
- ⇒ Expand website to include more comprehensive education materials on specific animal species, care guidelines, training.
- ⇒ Provide municipalities with animal care educational materials to be distributed when licensing is done.

### **Long-term**

- ⇒ Work with school boards and communities in the province to incorporate humane education into the curriculum, from pre-school through to Grade 12.
- ⇒ Locate or develop turnkey education packages that will not increase the workload of those in the school system – programs developed and delivered by animal welfare professionals.
- ⇒ Develop education materials in different languages, working in coordination with ethnic communities.

## **ANIMAL CONTROL**

### **The Issue**

Animal control involves the enforcement of by-laws set out by cities and municipalities to regulate, control and license animals -- primarily dogs -- that live in communities. Animal control contracts vary across communities but normally involve enforcement duties such as picking up stray dogs, issuing citations for unlicensed animals, picking up dead animals from roadways and responding to by-law complaints. Half of the 32 branches of the BC SPCA are involved in animal control. Animal Control Officers use education and enforcement tools to encourage compliance with by-laws concerned with companion animals and public health, public safety and licensing.

The reason the BC SPCA became involved in animal control originally was threefold:

1. to ensure that animals in communities were treated to a higher humane standard of care than that offered by some private contractors;
2. to allow animals to have longer stays in facilities -- over and above the mandated time periods for keeping animals prior to euthanasia
3. to offset costs of operating animal shelters that provided a wider array of services to the public than strictly dog pound facilities. In seeking public feedback, the BC SPCA asked the public if it should continue to be involved in animal control, as it exists now. Feedback was also invited regarding how to deal with aggressive dogs and how to change attitudes in terms of non-compliance to municipal pet-laws.

### **Public feedback**

Many submissions do not support the BC SPCA being involved in animal control, as it exists now, citing that animal control leads to unnecessary killing. Some submissions suggest that conducting animal control is in direct opposition to the BC SPCA's mission to prevent cruelty to, and promote the welfare of, animals. A pound is legally obligated to

collect and dispose of stray and dangerous dogs, while a shelter's role should be focused on maximum adoption of animals. The question arises: can the BC SPCA both kill and save animals and fulfill its mission? Many of the large unsocialized dogs that come in to shelters have suffered neglect or abuse. Some suggest the BC SPCA could have reduced the number had it maintained a stronger focus on cruelty prevention.

Some submissions point out that the BC SPCA spends more time giving out tickets to people walking their dogs off-leash but under control, than it does preventing cruelty or enforcing the PCA Act. One participant indicated that the BC SPCA should not act as tax collector for municipalities. Other participants noted that at least one branch has duties written into its contract with the municipality that have nothing to do with animals or animal welfare: enforcement of watering bylaws and picking up bicycles.

Submissions from staff and former staff members support the BC SPCA remaining in animal control. They go on to say that the reason the BC SPCA took over municipal pound contracts was due to the poor manner in which pounds run by municipalities handled and euthanized animals. It is also suggested that animal control officers, through their contact with the public have the opportunity to educate and create awareness of animal welfare issues.

One staff member made a lengthy submission in which he concluded that animal control contracts provide the Society with substantial opportunities to improve the lives of the animals it serves in the community. He states the opportunities stem from the BC SPCA's resources, funding, training, experience and contacts. In his view, involvement with animal control dramatically increases the Society's ability to rescue those in immediate danger or distress.

Breed banning as a way of dealing with aggressive dogs is not strongly supported. Some suggest that strict breeding laws be established and enforced. Animal breeders could be licensed and monitored, with perhaps a special license for aggressive breeds. Most feel that owners are the problem, not the breed. More education and training is recommended for people who adopt a breed that tends to be aggressive. One submission notes that banning breeds may simply cause other breeds to become popular which usually leads to overbreeding and eventually over-population of those breeds. Also, it is noted, "where do you draw the line on what is defined as aggressive"?

In terms of municipal by-law compliance, submissions state that awareness and education may lead to improved attitudes, noting that people may become more responsible if they understand the ramifications of irresponsible ownership.

Some point out that by-laws now in place must be more strictly enforced, such as spay/neuter by-laws, tethering laws and laws regarding dangerous, roaming and off-leash dogs.

Some submissions suggest that animal control should be left to local government with the BC SPCA providing animal welfare guidelines under which municipal contractors would operate.

Some submissions note that the BC SPCA is not open for business when people need help: weekends, evenings and statutory holidays. When people find straying dogs, they either cannot access the owners' name and number because the BC SPCA is closed, or they are told that there is nothing the BC SPCA can do after hours. One submission states that the caring for the well-being of animals is NOT a 9 to 5, five-day a week job – it's 24/7. It is suggested that resources be allocated to create an on-call service to ensure that

animals at large can be picked up after hours to prevent harm to them, or to make it possible to reunite a pet with an anxious guardian.

Also submissions note that some rural areas have no animal control or BC SPCA nearby. This results in lack of prevention or little enforcement of laws against cruelty.

### **Recommendations**

It is the view of the independent panel that the BC SPCA's reputation has suffered because the public believes that it has put the business of animal control ahead of animal welfare.

Cruelty prevention, education and advocacy appear to have an unacceptably low priority, and many participants in this public consultation are asking whether the BC SPCA can truly say, "it speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves". The BC SPCA must decide whether the heart and soul of the organization is based on business relationships with municipalities or with animal welfare. We understand the reasons why the BC SPCA became involved with animal control. However, in our view, animal control is a municipal issue and should be left to municipalities.

With this in mind, we recommend that the BC SPCA consider getting out of animal control as contracts expire and put additional effort and resources into prevention of cruelty, education and advocacy, which are the foundation of its mission. While there would be a loss of revenue initially, we are of the opinion that the public would be highly supportive of this strategy, and would give the BC SPCA the opportunity to increase revenues through targeted fundraising initiatives

*Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:*

#### **Short-term**

⇒ Decide in the next six to eight months whether or not the BC SPCA will get out of animal control.

⇒ Provide municipal pounds with BC SPCA standards of animal care and make them accountable through inspections.

#### **Long-term**

⇒ Develop agreements with municipalities that operate their own animal control to turn adoptable dogs over to the BC SPCA - adoptability to be determined by qualified animal behaviourists.

## **FERAL CATS**

### **The Issue**

Different terms are used to classify homeless cats. "Free-living cats" are those previously living in homes that are now homeless. "Semi-feral cats" are the homeless offspring of free-living cats. They are dependent on humans for food.

"Feral cats" are those born to free living cats. They are not directly dependent on humans for food - they hunt and scavenge. Free-living cats and semi-feral kittens can be (re) socialized. Exact numbers of homeless cats is not known, but a pair of cats can produce

420,000 offspring over a seven-year period.

Welfare issues faced by homeless cats are trauma and disease, particularly during kittenhood, rejection by colony members leading to death by starvation, injury from cat-cat fights. Many homeless cats are hurt or killed by cars or by predators (coyotes and dogs) and/or are infected with viral disease such as Rhinotracheitis.

Feral cats raise welfare issues for other animals. As introduced predators, cats prey on wildlife -- particularly song birds, rats, mice, frogs, fish, rabbits, and other small animals. In many instances free-living, semi-feral and feral cats injure animals and play with the catch without feeding on the creature.

In seeking public feedback, the BC SPCA asked for input on a number of issues. These included how the BC SPCA could best address the issue of abandonment of cats, whether the BC SPCA should support the practice of humane trapping, sterilizing, vaccinating and releasing of feral cats, and how feral colonies could be monitored and cared for. Other issues included whether homeless cats brought into the BC SPCA shelters be rehabilitated or euthanized -- based on potential for socialization-- rather than released to the streets, and whether animal guardians should be allowed to have their cats free-roam.

### **Public Feedback**

Submissions on this subject are very informed, demonstrating the interest and support in finding solutions to the feral cat issue.

Submissions recommend stiffer penalties for those who knowingly abandon any domestic animal. One submission recommends that anyone found guilty of abandoning kittens should be subjected to a penalty at least as great as the cost of a spay/neuter operation. More education around responsible pet ownership, including the need to spay and neuter is recommended. Some call for the BC SPCA to advocate against the sale of animals in pet stores, or for regulations that make it necessary for pet stores to arrange to have animals spayed/ neutered prior to sale. One submission notes that pet stores often release unwanted/unsold kittens without regard for their health and safety.

Opinions are divided on whether the BC SPCA should support the practice of humane trapping, neutering, vaccinating and releasing (TNVR) of feral cats. Submissions that support the TNVR practice indicate that mass euthanasia is not a remedy, since it has been proven that new cats will repopulate depleted colonies. Also one submission claims that feral cats do not need human affection to survive, and can be happy once they are fixed and their health is attended to. This submission also notes that the TNVR practice was pioneered in England and is now having good results in San Diego's feral cat colonies. Volunteer rescue groups monitor these colonies and provide them with shelter and feeding stations.

Some submissions support trapping and neutering but not releasing feral cats, suggesting the cats should be rehabilitated and socialized and if possible adopted into suitable homes. If they cannot be rehabilitated they should be humanely euthanized. Some support releasing feral cats but retaining, rehabilitating and re-homing semi-feral or free-living cats. Others feel that feral cats carry disease and cause damage to bird populations and so humane trapping and euthanasia are recommended.

With respect to homeless cats brought into the BC SPCA shelters some support the concept of rehabilitation if possible, or moving homeless cats to another location such as pet rescue facilities, which routinely deal with homeless cats. During the pet

overpopulation dialogue, cat rescue groups stated that they are more than willing to take on homeless cats and rehabilitate or manage their release into monitored colonies. It was recommended that the BC SPCA work more closely with cat rescue groups in establishing a TNVR practice and in the monitoring and care of existing cat colonies. Several submissions suggest licensing cats as a means of controlling feral cat populations.

Some recommend that cats should be subject to the same restrictions regarding their movements as dogs, i.e. they should be under control of their owner at all times. Others see nothing wrong with allowing cats to free-roam, as long as they are spayed/neutered, and the owner prepared to take responsibility for any complaints. Some point out the risk of allowing companion cats to free-roam i.e., dangers of being hit by cars or attacked by coyotes. Free-roaming cats are also known to cause considerable damage to bird populations and other wildlife.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the complex nature of the issue of feral cats, we believe that informed recommendations are beyond the scope of the independent panel. However, we recognize that the BC SPCA's Companion Animal Welfare Coordinator is undertaking research into the area of feral cats. We have reviewed the preliminary background paper that she has prepared on the control and care of feral cats, and would agree that the recommendations put forward in this paper have merit.

*With these in mind, our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:*

#### **Short-term**

- Establish a task force to research and identify solutions regarding the control and protection of feral cats.

#### **Long-term**

- Develop a policy regarding the control and protection of feral cats based on task force findings.
- Build closer relationships with community partners in finding solutions to feral cat problems.

## **AGRICULTURAL ANIMALS**

### **The Issue**

The BC SPCA's mandate covers all domestic animals, and yet many people are not aware of the work it does on behalf of those animals raised for food. In addition to investigating allegations of cruelty and neglect, the BC SPCA funds research into improved animal husbandry at UBC; plays a role with other agencies (RCMP, ICBC, Canadian Food Inspection Agency and others) in reviewing live animal transport; and makes an annual award to a farmer who takes exceptional care of his or her animals. The PCA Act specifically excludes 'standard management practices' from the enforcement provisions of the Act. Hot branding of cattle for example, although it causes pain, is not in contravention of the Act.

The BC SPCA is preparing to launch a humane labeling initiative. Farm products from animals raised to higher humane standards than those in Agriculture Canada's Codes of

Practice are labeled accordingly. Consumers will be able to choose products based on how humanely the animals were raised, transported and slaughtered.

In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA invited input on whether it should be involved in improving farm animal welfare, and the role it should play in promoting alternatives to ‘standard management practice’ and in animal transport and slaughter.

### **Public Feedback**

A number of submissions support the BC SPCA’s involvement in improving farm animal welfare. Some congratulate the BC SPCA on its new initiative, which involves special labeling for farm products derived from animals raised to higher humane standards.

Others do not support the BC SPCA taking on farm animal welfare, questioning whether it has the expertise or manpower to be effective. One submission states that the BC SPCA should monitor farm animal welfare but leave enforcement to paid field agents or local authorities.

Some bluntly say the BC SPCA does not belong in this area, and should stick to the protection of cats and dogs. Some submissions suggest that the BC SPCA should monitor the treatment of animals – primarily cats and dogs – used for food in some ethnic communities. Other submissions call on the BC SPCA to have this practice outlawed.

Some believe that ‘standard management practices’, which are condoned by law are too low, and that the BC SPCA should be lobbying the provincial government for higher standards.

A number of submissions support the BC SPCA’s monitoring of animal transport and slaughter, pointing out there is a need for impartial surveillance. Those who address this issue are appalled by the standards employed in factory farming, and see a role for the BC SPCA in improving conditions through a focus on neglect and inhumane procedures. A submission from the Canadians for Ethical Treatment of Food Animals states that the few improvements that have been made are due to pressure brought to bear when abuses were publicized. They suggest the BC SPCA’s presence and influence brings credible focus to this issue, which may encourage more research into humane methods and motivate officials and workers within the industry to do more.

The treatment and care of horses was addressed in both oral and written submissions. The Horse Protection Society of BC, which promotes the welfare of horses and responds to cruelty complaints, would like to strike a more cooperative relationship with the BC SPCA.

They have documented a number of complaints where they believe the BC SPCA did not respond appropriately. The treatment of animals at auction was also noted as an area that needs to be addressed by the BC SPCA.

### **Recommendations**

We understand that the Ministry of Agriculture monitors farm animal standards through inspections; any irregularities are brought to the attention of the BC SPCA. As well, the BC SPCA reacts to any public complaints of farm animal distress and enforces the Act. We recommend that the BC SPCA raise the bar on enforcement by using specifically developed Agricultural Animal Care Guidelines as an enforcement measurement tool. It is also the view of the independent panel that excluding ‘standard management practices’ from the enforcement provisions of the Act needs to be reviewed. In this regard, we

recommend that the BC SPCA lobby government for higher standards and, at the same time, work with the UBC Animal Welfare program to build a body of research that supports alternative approaches to humane animal care. We are aware that some research-based alternatives already exist, and we recommend that the BC SPCA promote these practices to build awareness and compliance.

In terms of transport and slaughter practices, the BC SPCA could look into securing a contractual arrangement with respect to inspection and enforcement of existing regulations.

In any case, the BC SPCA should continue to review these practices, and lobby the federal government through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for more rigid enforcement.

In all cases, the public is calling on the BC SPCA to enforce the Act as it applies to all agricultural animals. There is particular concern among the public about the treatment of horses and animals at auction. The Horse Protection Society of BC has impressed us with their knowledge and their willingness to work in partnership with the BC SPCA to protect and promote the welfare of horses. The BC SPCA should pursue a cooperative relationship with this group. We also recommend that the BC SPCA be a stronger presence at animal auctions where animals are known to suffer mistreatment and injury. One participant said that the presence of someone wearing a BC SPCA T-shirt at such events would help to improve standards, and serve as a deterrent to owners with prior histories of negligence from acquiring any animals in the future.

The Freedom Farmed program has much public support. At the same time, the BC SPCA should be working to build more industry support and public awareness of this initiative. Some submissions indicated that, to date, there has not been enough consultation with the industry.

***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

***Short-term***

- ⇒ Develop Animal Care Guidelines for agricultural animals and use these as the measurement tool in enforcing the Act.
- ⇒ Increase presence at animal auctions.
- ⇒ Establish a cooperative relationship with the Horse Protection Society of BC.

***Long-term***

- ⇒ Lobby government so that higher ‘standard management practices’ will be established and monitored.
- ⇒ Lobby the federal government through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for more rigid enforcement of transport and slaughter regulations.
- ⇒ Look into a possible contractual arrangement with the government to inspect transportation and slaughter processes/facilities.

***Ongoing***

- ⇒ Continue support of UBC Animal Welfare program to build more humane, research based practices and graduate more experts in animal welfare.
- ⇒ Keep moving forward with the Freedom Farmed pilot, while building further industry support and public awareness of the program.



## **WILDLIFE**

### **The Issue**

Just as many people enjoy positive relationships with wild animals, human conflicts with wildlife are increasing as BC's population grows. In urban areas citizens are concerned that urban coyotes are causing a safety threat for children and pets. Wild animals nest in people's homes, and pigeon and rat populations are increasing. Conflicts with bears and cougars in urban areas are becoming more frequent and questions are raised on how conservation officers deal with these situations. The BC SPCA receives over 5,000 calls a year concerning wildlife issues and handles close to 4,000 wild animals that are injured and in need of rehabilitation each year.

Outside the city, wildlife species -- such as the Vancouver Island Marmot and the Burrowing Owl -- are threatened with extinction. BC's bear-hunting policies are under review. In BC we continue to trap wild animals for their fur. There is pressure from ranchers to poison wolves. Some First Nation communities are contemplating a return to whale hunting.

In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA invited comments with respect to the role the BC SPCA should play in wildlife issues, what it can do to help solve problems with urban wildlife, how it can help people co-exist with wildlife and whether it should have a separate wildlife department. It also asked for input on BC's hunting policies.

### **Public Feedback**

Feedback on this topic was limited. Various approaches were recommended in terms of the role the BC SPCA should play in wildlife issues. Some state that the BC SPCA should not be involved with wildlife issues, recommending that the protection of wild animals should be the responsibility of various levels of governments. However, some feel the BC SPCA can play an advocacy role, putting pressure on governments to address wildlife issues in a more responsible manner. Others suggest wildlife concerns should be referred to wildlife rescue groups.

Education seems to be the strongest recommendation regarding problem wildlife in urban areas. Some suggest that if animal control of wildlife species in urban areas is required, that the BC SPCA must ensure it is done humanely and using methods based on current scientific research.

Some strongly recommend that the BC SPCA create broad awareness of how to coexist with wildlife such as coyotes and raccoons. Coyotes, for instance, have become a major issue in some municipalities. An educational media campaign is suggested with a focus on the protective measures people can take for their children and pets, and how they should behave when they encounter coyotes and other wildlife. For example, the "rescue" of fledging crows creates a problem every year – people think they are injured when they are simply learning to fly. This prompts many unnecessary calls to the BC SPCA and wildlife refuges.

Most submission do not support the BC SPCA having a wildlife department, stating that this would spread the Society's resources too thin. Some suggest leaving wildlife issues to the experts – wildlife rescue groups and provincial agencies. However, having some staff members knowledgeable about wildlife is recommended. One submission supports a BC SPCA wildlife department with funding from both provincial and federal

governments. In some rural areas, there is concern that the BC SPCA does not have the resources to respond to calls of injured wildlife. The result is animals being left to suffer and/or die a painful death.

Most submissions call for banning the bear hunt. One submission notes that while domestic animals are a priority to the Society, it should play an active part in building research and independent studies that can contribute data to governments on issues such as bear hunts.

### **Recommendations**

The independent panel's recommendations regarding the BC SPCA and wildlife issues are based on the fact that the PCA Act does not apply to wildlife that is not in captivity. However, as Dr. Ken Langelier of the panel points out, the BC SPCA by its name should be trying to protect all animals that can feel pain or suffer psychological deprivation. While the BC SPCA may not be involved in conservation and management issues, it could be a watchdog on how this is done. It could, for instance, ensure that humane methods are used for any culls or for the capture and euthanasia of wildlife in urban areas. In terms of wildlife rehabilitation centres, Dr. Langelier's experience has led him to have a great deal of concern about the level of humane treatment that occurs in these facilities. In his view, the aim is to successfully return an animal to the wild and if it is determined to be

non-releasable, it should be humanely euthanized. However, he has seen that these wildlife rehabilitation centres often become zoos of crippled wildlife where animals are put on public display to raise funds. He also notes that people who are often poorly educated in wildlife rehabilitation manage these facilities.

We recommend that the BC SPCA regularly inspect and enforce the Act at wildlife rehabilitation centres anywhere in BC where wildlife is held in captivity and where the BC SPCA has jurisdiction. The BC SPCA may want to consider developing some form of standardization and accreditation for wildlife rehabilitation centres.

The independent panel does not believe that the BC SPCA should aggressively take on the task of wildlife at this time. Currently, the BC SPCA, under the Wildlife Act and under permit, responds to calls concerning injured wildlife. These animals are euthanized or turned over to wildlife rehabilitation centres. Nuisance urban wildlife such as raccoons is often re-located. Going forward, the BC SPCA needs to define how and when it will deal with wildlife issues and enact consistent practices across the province. We recommend that the BC SPCA have staff that is knowledgeable about wildlife issues in terms of emergency procedures, advice and when to refer to other agencies. Also, the BC SPCA should play a role in educating the public on coexisting with wildlife.

### ***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

#### **Short-term**

- ⇒ Inspect facilities and enforce the Act with regards to the standards of care and treatment of wildlife where it is held in captivity
- ⇒ Develop position papers on certain issues relating to wildlife and publicize those papers through the website and media.
- ⇒ Define its role in dealing with wildlife issues and implement consistent practices across the province.
- ⇒ Define the BC SPCA's advocacy role with respect to wildlife issues.

**Long-term**

- ⇒ Consider some form of standardization and accreditation be developed for wildlife rehabilitation centres.
- ⇒ Partner with other wildlife and environmental groups in educating the public about coexisting with wildlife.
- ⇒ Participate in building research and independent studies.

**ANIMALS IN ENTERTAINMENT****The Issue**

The Society is opposed to exploiting animals for human entertainment. As is the case across Canada, in BC there are a number of events and facilities that integrate and use animals for profit such as traveling circuses, rodeos and private zoos. There are also facilities such as the Vancouver Aquarium that house marine mammals, yet also do conservation work for animals in the wild. There are non-profit animal refuges that display their animals to the public. The entertainment industry also uses animals in a number of movie, television and commercial productions; the BC SPCA has trained monitors on site.

In seeking public feedback, the BC SPCA asked for input on whether there was any value in using animals in entertainment, on the role the BC SPCA should play in monitoring, regulating or restricting these events and whether animals should be on public display for profit.

**Public Feedback**

Feedback on this topic was limited. Views are about evenly divided on whether animals should be used for entertainment purposes at all. Some submissions support animals being used in entertainment when there is educational value in doing so, while others are totally against any animals being used for entertainment value.

One submission notes several benefits to animals used for entertainment; the bond animals develop with trainers, the animals' enjoyment of athletic performance, and reduced boredom for animals -- as often seen in zoos.

Several submissions suggest that the BC SPCA has not done enough to regulate or restrict rodeos. Some say that the BC SPCA should make a stronger effort to stop these activities, noting that the animals are abused and terrorized. Calf roping is seen as especially brutal.

One submission says that the public will remain confused on the BC SPCA's position regarding the exploitation of animals for human entertainment as long as they continue to monitor an entertainment site and, by implication, give their endorsement of the activity. Another submission notes that any role that degrades or puts the animal in a difficult or dangerous situation should not be allowed.

Other submissions suggest that the BC SPCA monitor events where animals are used for commercial purposes to make sure the animals are treated humanely. It is noted that the BC SPCA has the ability to certify and make recommendations as to the condition and treatment of performing animals.

Some submissions suggest that no animals should be on public display for profit even if it is for educational purposes. Others support animals on display in zoos and aquariums noting that these animals often serve as educational examples of their intelligence and ability.

However, these same submissions recommend that if these animals are being abused then they should be seized and the owners charged.

While some submissions see the educational value of marine mammal displays, others are vehemently opposed -- particularly to keeping whales in captivity.

### **Recommendations**

It is the view of the independent panel that the BC SPCA's opposition to the exploitation of animals in entertainment is not widely known or recognized. The public may perceive monitoring and inspecting sites and **not** laying any charges means the BC SPCA endorses these events. In reality the BC SPCA has no jurisdiction under the PCA Act to prohibit organizations undertaking activities where animals are used for entertainment. However, it does have the power to inspect and enforce the Act. Our view is that the BC SPCA needs to take on a stronger inspection role and profile at these events. As well it needs to build awareness and understanding of its position as it relates to animals in entertainment.

*Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:*

#### **Short-term**

⇒ Strengthen its presence and heighten its inspection role at events where animals are used for entertainment purposes.

⇒ Have the board of directors (or committee of the board) develop a position paper regarding the BC SPCA's stand on these issues; use Dr. Fraser and students/graduates from UBC Animal Welfare Program as a resource.

⇒ Consider advocacy initiatives to educate the public regarding the exploitation of animals in entertainment.

## **EXOTIC SPECIES**

### **The Issue**

Currently, thousands of wild, exotic animals are sold through pet stores throughout BC. Other larger animals such as lions, tigers and monkeys are sold at exotic animal auctions. Many exotic animals are taken from the wild in other countries and imported to BC. Others are bred and raised locally in captivity and sold to pet stores or sold privately through the Internet or newspaper. Adequate care information on most exotic animals is limited -- especially for the smaller animals sold in pet stores -- and many die in captivity long before they reach the store shelves.

Federal legislation governing the trade in exotic animals is generally limited to prohibitions on the import of species listed as endangered or threatened. Often exotic animals are surrendered to BC SPCA shelters, or released into the wild to live an uncertain future or to potentially disrupt local ecosystems. Refuges for exotic animals are few and most are filled to capacity.

In seeking input the BC SPCA asked a number of questions. These included whether a ban should be enacted on the trade of exotic species, whether keepers of exotic pets should be certified, whether sanctuaries should be established for exotic pets, and what the BC SPCA should do when it receives exotics.

### **Public Feedback**

While public feedback on this issue was not voluminous, it was generally well informed. The Rainforest Reptile Refuge Society in Surrey, BC made a long and thoughtful submission, which we will reference.

Most submissions that address this issue are against keeping exotic animals as pets, noting that these animals should be left in their native habitats. A total ban of exotic species is broadly recommended. Strict bylaws prohibiting ownership of exotic animals would eliminate the need for certification. However, it is noted that there will always be an underground trade to deal with. Most recommend that exotic animals received by the BC SPCA be turned over to zoos or sanctuaries where they can be properly cared for. Submissions indicate that sanctuaries are necessary at least until a ban reduces the numbers.

In terms of funding, submissions put forward various schemes: government funded refuges, refuges run by volunteers with some financial support from the BC SPCA, or refuges funded by pet stores who sell exotic species; a portion of sales would go into a fund for sanctuaries.

### **Recommendations**

The panel recommends that the best way for the BC SPCA to address the issue of exotic animals is through education and advocacy. The BC SPCA can work in partnership with exotic animal sanctuaries to develop and deliver messages that discourage the keeping of exotic animals in captivity. While the BC SPCA itself cannot enact a ban on the trade of exotic animals, it can mount or support advocacy initiatives to change provincial and/or federal legislation.

#### ***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

##### **Short-term**

⇒ Partner with the Rainforest Reptile Refuge Society, other exotic animal sanctuaries and the UBC Animal Welfare Program to develop education initiatives aimed at not keeping exotics in captivity as pets.

⇒ Survey branches regarding the current handling of exotics received in BC SPCA shelters and identify options for the future.

##### **Long-term**

⇒ Consider lobbying provincial government and/or in partnership with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies lobby the federal government to create legislation, banning trade in exotic species.

## **FIRST NATIONS**

### **The Issue**

British Columbia has a large population of First Nations peoples, whose traditional relationships with animals take many forms - subsistence, trade, totemic relationships, and others. Profound reverence and understanding of humanity's interdependence with the animal realm are woven into traditional native culture.

Today, while some First Nations continue to honour animals in the old ways, others have

adopted a modern viewpoint, which sometimes sees animals as commodities rather than as valued individuals.

Many BC SPCA branches maintain good relationships with local bands, while others struggle to establish a presence. Animal welfare problems on Reservations include a high incidence of strays, dog bites, over-breeding, roving dog packs and euthanasia by shooting. Traditional native whaling and trapping of wild animals are other contentious issues.

Several First Nations people have been or are valued members of BC SPCA boards and staff, but overall, they are under-represented within the Society. As British Columbians in all walks of life work to redefine and improve our relationships with First Nations peoples, new partnerships and new understanding between the BC SPCA and native peoples become possible. The BC SPCA recognizes First Nations communities are for the most part beyond the reach of BC SPCA services and programs. In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA asked for input on how best to approach this.

### **Public Feedback**

Most submissions recommend the BC SPCA find ways to more effectively intervene with First Nations communities to improve the conditions of animals on reservations. Some suggest tougher legislation at the federal level that would give the BC SPCA the authority to intervene and take appropriate action when there is concern about neglect or abuse, just as they would in communities other than First Nations.

All submissions point out that animal abuse on Reservations is a major problem. However, some recognize that the BC SPCA has and will continue to meet with resistance when attempting to intervene into native community affairs. Some suggest that the best approach may be to provide humane education programs to children in these communities in an effort to improve their knowledge of animal welfare issues. Other suggestions include developing liaisons with First Nations peoples who are open to the message of humane education, and who can communicate it in a way that would reflect the culture and beliefs of these communities. Another submission recommends attracting First Nations peoples to become BC SPCA Constables as a way of educating and enforcing humane practices on reservations.

The municipality of Duncan is seen to have a very large problem in this regard. BC SPCA Cowichan and District Branch management note that access to Bands in this area is a continuing struggle.

### **Recommendations**

Because First Nations people are self-governed, it is our view that the BC SPCA will continue to face challenges in gaining access to them. In saying this, the independent panel believes that the BC SPCA needs to attempt/continue to develop liaisons with Band officials, chiefs and council members in assisting the BC SPCA with issues of cruelty and neglect. Starting with the elders in the community is viewed as essential, since they define and sustain the culture of their peoples, which has historically included a spiritual reverence and respect for animals and nature.

Providing humane education to the children in these communities may be the best strategy to promote awareness of animal welfare and to prevent cruelty and abuse.

However, we believe that the messages must be delivered by First Nations peoples themselves in a format that is acceptable to their communities.

***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

**Long-term**

- ⇒ Develop liaisons with elders/chiefs in First Nations bands to assist in issues of animal investigations and enforcements.
- ⇒ Conduct research regarding models in health and service groups that may work well for the BC SPCA in delivering humane education messages to First Nations peoples.
- ⇒ Develop liaisons with elders/chiefs in First Nations Bands to assist in delivering humane education programs to their peoples.
- ⇒ Include First Nations representatives on BC SPCA Branch Community Advisory Committees where possible.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

**The Issue**

The BC SPCA is often accused of being a secretive organization that is highly bureaucratic. People have also said that from Branch to Branch procedures and services appear to be different and sometimes at odds with one another. The goal should be to standardize service across the province and to make the organization as transparent as possible. In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA asked what information the public would like to see the BC SPCA make available to them, and what expectations the public has around consistency of services and procedures for the entire province.

**Public feedback**

Submissions recommend that all publicly funded organizations should be held accountable to the citizens who support them and should provide details to the public including funds paid for salaries, rent and other fixed costs. The expense involved with the BC SPCA Head Office having offices in downtown Vancouver is raised, with the recommendation that head office could save costs by operating out of an existing shelter. Many submissions voice concerns about the salary paid to the Executive Director of the Vancouver Branch - they saw it as a major violation of trust and as a lack of accountability to donors. However, the salary issue was more of a springboard to their real concerns, which focused on the condition of BC SPCA animal shelters (particularly in the Lower Mainland), the standards of care given to animals and the attitude of staff. A number of submissions note the lack of consistency of services and procedures across the network of the Society's branches and shelters. People want to know to whom branch management and staff are held accountable, and how the BC SPCA sets and monitors standards for animal care across the province. A submission from a Vancouver Regional Branch board member states that in her view, the Society's problems arise from its dysfunctional organizational structure, where each of the Society's 32 branches has its own board of directors and operates autonomously. The result is varying standards and procedures from branch to branch.

There are a number of submissions that focus specifically on accountability in the Victoria Branch. Members of the Victoria branch voice concern over the lack of

transparency and accountability of branch management and the board of directors to the membership. The lack of professional procedure at the Year 2001 AGM is referenced more than once. One submission notes that the relationship between veterinarians and the Victoria Branch has been in downward spiral for years. He also notes that veterinarians carry a huge part of the animal welfare burden, one that he believes should rightfully be carried by the Society.

Several submissions recommend that the constitution and general organization of the Society be altered so it functions as one legal entity governed by the *Society Act*. The expectation is that all BC SPCA branches and shelters should provide professional and consistent services throughout the province that are aligned with the overriding values, commitments and goals of the Society.

In both oral and written submissions it was recommended that the BC SPCA provide the public with information on cruelty cases and actions being taken.

### **Recommendations**

Accountability is a huge issue with the public and one the BC SPCA should take very seriously. The independent panel recommends that the BC SPCA be more open and transparent regarding its operations and financial management, and communicate with its members and the public regularly. We recommend that the BC SPCA develop a process for accountability and transparency in such areas as the prudent use of funds (salaries, rent and other fixed assets), cruelty investigations, advocacy initiatives, positions on animal issues and branch programs and services. The BC SPCA must make every effort to create a culture that clearly stands for animal welfare and to create and implement consistent policies, programs and services at all branches.

We understand that the Society is undergoing an organizational renewal that would see it governed as one legal entity, rather than as a federation of independently governed branches.

We hope that achieving accountability will be easier under this new structure. However, whether or not the structure changes, the BC SPCA **must** make itself accountable to those it depends on for its survival: donors and members, volunteers, staff.

### ***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

#### ***Urgent***

⇒ Create a statement of values and commitments in coordination with staff and volunteers, which will result in a culture that clearly stands for the welfare of animals.

#### ***Short-term***

⇒ Develop consistent policies, programs and services that align with the Society's values, commitments and strategic objectives.

⇒ Develop a process for accountability and transparency; research the accountability and transparency mechanisms used in other high profile non-profit associations.

⇒ Provide a mechanism for the public to track cruelty investigations, ensuring privacy of individuals while cases are under investigation.

⇒ Demonstrate voluntary sharing of information by convening public information forums in different regions throughout the year.

### **ADVOCACY**



## **The Issue**

Speaking for Animals often means advocating for them. Some of the BC SPCA's successful advocacy programs have resulted in improvements to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act; the passing of local by-laws prohibiting touring circus animal acts; and improvements to conditions for laboratory animals. The BC SPCA also participates in national advocacy through the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies and, at the municipal level, advocacy in partnerships with other animal welfare organizations.

Much of the Society's advocacy work in the past has been 'behind the scenes' rather than in public. This has resulted in criticism that the BC SPCA appears to be too secretive.

The BC SPCA can and should be doing more to advocate on behalf of animals.

In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA asked for input on what process the BC SPCA should follow in setting an advocacy agenda, and what animal welfare issues should have priority on that agenda.

## **Public Feedback**

Many participants want to see the BC SPCA become a stronger and more public advocate for animals. An animal welfare advisory group consisting of academics, veterinarians, and representatives of other relevant organizations is considered by some to be a good strategy -- provided it has the power to make change or can link with a process to enforce its recommendations.

Advocacy is noted as a key driver in creating change. One submission states, “if environmentalists hadn’t caused all the problems for the logging industry there would still be clear cutting and irresponsible forest practices”. Another suggestion is to use volunteers in letter writing campaigns. For example, a stronger advocacy front could be mounted to support federal legislation that calls for pets to be classified as sentient beings rather than chattel. As well, many submissions call on the BC SPCA to work more proactively for legislation that enables responsible renters and condominium owners to adopt and retain pets.

One submission calls for a Bill of Rights for animals stating, “once the BC SPCA has established what is humane and proper treatment of animals in private, commercial and natural contexts, then it can move ahead with the laws and other mechanisms to secure and guarantee those rights”. Some suggest that advocacy needs to address the fundamental issue of responsible pet ownership to ensure those who adopt companion animals are properly prepared to provide them with lifelong care. A number of submissions support advocating for tougher laws and higher penalties for those who neglect and abuse animals. In particular,

Animal Advocates Society and other individuals claim that the BC SPCA has not done enough in this area, particularly in helping tethered dogs. One submission points out that the BC SPCA needs to live up to its motto of “speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves” and demonstrate that it is not going to tolerate cruelty.

Some would like to see the BC SPCA lobby for humane food legislation, a ban of the grizzly bear hunt and address the issue of animals used in research. Also the issues of animals in entertainment, puppy mills and pet stores sales need to be addressed.

## **Recommendations**

The BC SPCA needs to commit more effort and resources to speaking on behalf of the animals. In our view, advocacy is a powerful tool in bringing about positive change and should be a high priority for the BC SPCA.

We recommend that the BC SPCA immediately establish a welfare advisory committee to develop an advocacy agenda and set priorities. With this in mind, we recommend that each year, the BC SPCA mount advocacy campaigns around issues where change is needed.

While the BC SPCA can set the framework, it is the voice of the public that brings about change. We recommend that the BC SPCA actively recruit volunteer advocates and provide them with the tools they will need to become informed about the issues and to make their voices heard. One way is to establish an advocacy page on the BC SPCA website complete with position statements on animal issues, sample letters and links to names/addresses of government representatives. Volunteers willing to advocate on behalf of the BC SPCA should be actively recruited.

***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

***Urgent***

- Establish an Advocacy Advisory Group of academics, veterinarians, and representatives of other organizations - to develop an advocacy agenda and set priorities.
- Actively recruit volunteer advocates.

***Short-term***

- Create an Advocacy web page that provides volunteer advocates with the necessary information and tools to support BC SPCA advocacy initiatives.
- Develop an advocacy/campaign plan for 2002 around two issues that need change.

**HUMAN/ANIMAL BOND**

**The Issue**

Perhaps Roger Caras said it best: “[Animals] are not our whole lives, they make our lives whole.” The emotional attachment between people and animals is well documented.

The consultation identified two areas for discussion.

1) The strength or weakness of guardians' attachment for their pets has been identified as the main factor in why pets are given up. When people are highly bonded to their pets, they will often find alternatives for solving problems rather than relinquishing the animal to a shelter.

A well-behaved and affectionate pet, as well as a good guardian-pet match, are the main factors influencing the strength of the bond.

2) Research of the bond provides evidence of its health benefits to humans. Our relations with animals can improve our physical and mental health, enhance empathy and IQ in children, increase social contact between humans and buffer the stresses of urban life. Since animals provide unconditional love they can also be used to help at-risk youth and adults to develop empathy skills and provide healing where there has been physical or mental abuse.

Shelter animals have been integrated into this kind of programming by humane societies across North America.

The BC SPCA currently has a cat care program at the Sumas Correctional Centre where

inmates take care of surplus cats until they can be moved to shelters for adoption. The Vancouver Regional Branch is working with street youth to help them learn appropriate care and treatment of their own animal companions. In addition, the BC SPCA offers two education courses that focus on the therapeutic application of the human/animal bond. In seeking public feedback the BC SPCA invited input on a range of issues that influence the human/animal bond, from access to pet friendly housing to programs aimed at improving people's health and welfare using the human/animal bond. Feedback was also sought regarding the BC SPCA's adoption process and how it could be improved to ensure that new animal guardians understand the importance of human/animal relations and are willing to assume the responsibilities associated with being a pet guardian. As well, the BC SPCA asked how it should handle animals with behavioural problems in terms of assessment and adoption.

### **Public Feedback**

Submissions fully support renters having access to pet friendly housing and call on the BC SPCA to become a stronger advocate in this area. Promoting the human health benefits of human-animal relations is recommended as a strategy. Animal companionship is noted to be of importance to seniors who are perhaps more likely to run into restrictions.

Most submissions support programs aimed at improving people's health and welfare using the human/animal bond such as pet visitation at seniors' homes, and training health professionals to integrate animals into their therapeutic practices. Animal companionship is noted as being especially beneficial to seniors. One submission notes that the BC SPCA should be more proactive in adopting more dogs to extended care facilities. Some submissions recommend partnering with social agencies in creating early intervention violence-prevention programs that help youth and others deal with violent and antisocial behaviour. Suggestions include integrating animals into juvenile detention centres and other social services facilities.

To help prospective adopters make an appropriate guardian-pet match, submissions recommend that behavioural profiles be prepared and posted with all BC SPCA shelter animals up for adoption. To promote pet retention, a 1-800 line is recommended to provide guardians of shelter animals with necessary information and support. Submissions note that ample information should be available at the time of adoption and after, in a continuous effort to help people better understand and care for their animal companions. In-home guidance is also suggested as a means of support.

### **Recommendations**

Some of the recommendations we are putting forward have been addressed earlier under Animal Shelters. However, they bear repeating. These recommendations, which address the issue of pet retention, include improving the adoption process to ensure a suitable pet/guardian match is achieved, together with the provision of ample pet care information and follow-up support. Every effort should be made by the BC SPCA to emphasize the importance of responsible pet ownership and the mutual benefits of the human/animal bond.

We also emphasize the importance of developing animal behaviour profiles for shelter

animals and working with behaviourists to assess and, where possible, retrain animals with problems.

We believe that the BC SPCA should be involved in promoting the health benefits of the human/animal bond. In addition to pet visitation programs, which are already in place, the BC SPCA should make efforts to adopt animals to long-term care facilities.

Research has shown that there is a link between youth and animal abuse and acts of violence in later life. Therefore there seems to be value in partnering with social agencies to create early intervention prevention programs. This is being done in some other provinces in Canada. Working more closely with the law enforcement community will help both the BC SPCA and law enforcers to identify abusers and break the cycle of abuse.

It is a fact that abused persons will stay in an abusive relationship rather than leave a pet with the abuser. Under a broad partnership in effect with the BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses, several BC SPCA branches have relationships with transition houses to assist people who are trying to leave abusive relationships and we commend this initiative. We recommend that efforts in this area be continued and strengthened.

In terms of pets in rental housing, the BC SPCA first needs to establish a prioritized advocacy agenda. Advocacy is discussed later in this report.

***Our specific recommendations call on the BC SPCA to:***

Promote health benefits of the human/animal bond

**Long-term**

- ⇒ Investigate how the BC SPCA could adopt animals to long-term care facilities.
- ⇒ Establish a process whereby the BC SPCA and the law enforcement community exchange animal/people abuse information in an effort to break the cycle.
- ⇒ Research partnerships with social agencies to create early intervention violence programs.
- ⇒ Continue and strengthen efforts to support people with pets who are leaving a physically abusive domestic situation.

**Ongoing**

- ⇒ Continue to build on the partnership with the Sumas correctional facility to create additional opportunities where unwanted animals can be housed and cared for.
- ⇒ Continue to offer education on the therapeutic application of the human/animal bond.

Promote adoption/pet retention

**Short-term**

- ⇒ Ensure that comprehensive animal profiles are posted on cages/kennels of all shelter animals and that all information (history, behavioural and medical) goes with the animal when it is transferred between shelters.
- ⇒ Implement adoption screening/counseling programs at all BC SPCA shelters to help successfully match people to suitable animal companions and to provide information on all aspects of responsible pet care.
- ⇒ Provide adoption follow-up and support services to those who have adopted shelter animals; consider a 1-800 information and support line.

**Long-term**

- ⇒ Establish standard animal behavioural assessment procedures utilizing the services of

qualified animal behaviourists.

⇒ Determine how the BC SPCA can best support responsible renters in adopting and keeping their pets.

## **APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **ENFORCEMENT OF THE PCA ACT**

#### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

⇒ Create a work group to revise the current Animal Care Guidelines to reflect specific needs for all animals based on the five freedoms\* and to include more detailed language re: the definition of “neglect”.

⇒ Establish 2 to 3 Special Provincial Constables (SPCs) in each of the 12 proposed regions as experts in investigation and case law procedures

⇒ Establish an “Animal Case Law Work Group” to develop a liaison with the Crown, with the objective of conducting successful prosecutions that will build case law to support future cruelty prosecutions

⇒ Develop species-specific “Animal Care Guidelines for animals such as dogs, cats, horses, livestock

⇒ Provide Animal Care Guidelines to all new animal guardians as a covenant/agreement by which they will be measured; leave guidelines behind when investigating a cruelty complaint and provide to municipalities to distribute when licensing dogs.

⇒ Mount public awareness and education campaigns focusing on responsible animal care.

⇒ Develop an accountability process so the public can track the effectiveness of cruelty investigations.

⇒ Lobby Provincial Government to contribute more funds toward enforcement of the Act.

⇒ Provide ongoing training in investigative procedures through the Justice Institute to all BC SPCA - SPCs

⇒ Provide ongoing internal training to SPCs and other staff re: enforcement of revised “Animal Care Guidelines”.

### **ANIMAL SHELTERS**

#### **Operational Policies and Procedures**

#### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

⇒ Commit resources to upgrading older, sub-standard facilities owned by the BC SPCA, and actively encourage municipalities to bring their facilities up to BC SPCA recommended standards

⇒ Establish a centralized Human Resources function to develop standard recruitment policies and programs

⇒ Establish appropriate recruitment screening, interview and evaluation procedures to ensure potential employees and volunteers are well suited to work for an animal welfare society

⇒ Make training programs that encompass all aspects of shelter operations, including special training in customer service, mandatory

⇒ Improve delivery of euthanasia training to staff using BC SPCA standard methods

⇒ Make shelter superintendents/shelter managers responsible and accountable for integrating volunteers into shelter operations in a meaningful, non-threatening way

⇒ Evaluate customer service levels through a secret shopper system.

⇒ Establish specific care guidelines for shelter animals to maintain consistently high standards of cleanliness, healthy diet, blankets and beds for dogs, enriched and/or communal cat cages for both dogs and cats to exercise.

## **ANIMAL SHELTERS**

### **Operational Policies and Procedures cont'd**

#### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

⇒ Re-evaluate the role of the BC SPCA animal hospitals

⇒ Re-visit plan to build a state-of-the-art shelter in the Lower Mainland that would serve as a model for new BC SPCA regional shelters

⇒ Make superintendents/shelter managers non-union positions wherever and whenever possible, and, where not possible, establish a TIPS line for staff and volunteers so that they can lodge complaints with BC SPCA management without fear of retaliation

## **ANIMAL SHELTERS**

### **Adoption Policies and Procedures**

#### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

⇒ Establish a centralized database that can easily access profiles

of all adoption animals and keep track of where animals are physically located so that when an animal is transported to another facility it can be found quickly.

- ⇒ Promote BC SPCA shelters as community adoption centres; seriously consider expanding adoption viewing hours
- ⇒ Ensure comprehensive animal profiles are posted on cages/kennels of all shelter animals and that all information (history, behavioural and medical) goes with the animal when it is transferred.

## **ANIMAL SHELTERS**

### **Adoption Policies and Procedures cont'd**

#### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Implement adoption counseling programs at all BC SPCA shelters to help successfully match people to suitable animal companions and to provide information on all aspects of responsible pet care.
  
- ⇒ Provide adoption follow-up and support services for those who have adopted shelter animals; consider 1-800 support line
  
- ⇒ Establish fostering programs at all BC SPCA shelters for: abandoned and surrendered kittens and puppies; ill, injured or stressed animals that are not quite ready for adoption; and, any potentially adoptable animal when shelters are full
  
- ⇒ Provide humane education materials and resources to the public, including a comprehensive adoption kit for all new animal guardians; incorporate "Animal Care Guidelines" and adoption agreement/covenant
  
- ⇒ Establish standard animal behavioural assessment procedure utilizing the services of qualified animal behaviourists

## **VOLUNTEERISM**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Commit more resources to volunteer recruitment, management and development
- ⇒ Develop a plan to hire regional Volunteer Coordinators
- ⇒ Conduct focus groups with BC SPCA unionized staff and volunteers to resolve issues between these groups
- ⇒ Work with the union in the redesign of the employee volunteer relationship

## **PET OVERPOPULATION**

### **Reduce Birth Rate**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Lead by example and spay/neuter all shelter animals prior to adoption.
- ⇒ Establish a cooperative, non-competitive relationship with the veterinary community in all regions of BC with an eye to expanding community based spay/neuter programs
  
- ⇒ Mount major educational and public awareness campaigns to encourage pet guardians to sterilize their pets; work with municipalities and the veterinary community to deliver responsible pet guardian information
  
- ⇒ Expand spay/neuter assistance for low income people
  
- ⇒ Advocate for mandatory spay/neuter by-laws to demonstrate that it is socially unacceptable to have an unsterilized pet
  
- ⇒ Organize a deliberative dialogue with the Canadian Kennel Club and dog fancier groups and develop an approach to identify and address the problem of indiscriminate breeding

### **PET OVERPOPULATION**

#### **- Increase adoptions/pet retention**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Develop cooperative relationships with other animal rescue/welfare groups such as breed rescue and feral cat rescue in an effort to rehabilitate and re-home animals.
  
- ⇒ Implement behaviour assessment, adoption counseling, and adoption follow-up programs as detailed under recommendations for animal shelters
  
- ⇒ Establish fostering programs at all BC SPCA shelters, as detailed under recommendations for animal shelters
  
- ⇒ Determine how the BC SPCA can best support renters and condominium owners in adopting and retaining pets
  
- ⇒ Expand satellite adoption centres (Petcetera and Pet Squad) to include more locations and other partners

### **EDUCATION**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Create broader understanding and awareness of animal welfare issues through compelling media, advertising and advocacy campaigns.



- ⇒ Develop a broad range of educational materials and provide at all BC SPCA animal shelters
- ⇒ Expand website to include more comprehensive education materials on specific animal species, care guidelines and training
- ⇒ Provide municipalities with animal care educational materials to be distributed when licensing is done
- ⇒ Work with school boards and communities in the BC to incorporate humane education into the curriculum from preschool to Grade 12
- ⇒ Locate or develop turnkey education packages that will not increase the workload of the school system - delivered by animal welfare professionals
- ⇒ Develop education materials in different languages, working in coordination with ethnic communities

## **ANIMAL CONTROL**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Decide in the next six to eight months whether or not the BC SPCA will get out of animal control
- ⇒ Provide municipal pounds with BC SPCA standards of animal care and make them accountable through inspections
- ⇒ Develop agreements with municipalities that operate their own animal control to turn adoptable dogs over to the BC SPCA – adoptability to be determined by qualified animal behaviourists

## **FERAL CATS**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Establish a task force to research and identify solutions regarding the control and protection of feral cats
- ⇒ Develop a policy regarding the control and protection of feral cats based on task force findings
- ⇒ Build closer relationships with community partners in finding solutions to feral cat problems

## **AGRICULTURAL ANIMALS**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Develop species-specific Animal Care Guidelines for agricultural animals and use these as the measurement tool in

enforcing the Act

- ⇒ Increase presence at animal auctions
- ⇒ Establish a cooperative relationship with the Horse Protection Society of BC
- ⇒ Lobby the government so that higher 'standard management practices' will be established and monitored
- ⇒ Lobby the federal government through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for more rigid enforcement of transport and slaughter regulations

⇒ Look into possible contractual arrangement with the government to inspect transportation and slaughter processes/facilities

⇒ Continue support of UBC Animal Welfare program to build more humane research-based practices and graduate more experts in animal welfare

⇒ Keep moving forward with the Freedom Farmed pilot, while building further industry support and public awareness for the program

## **WILDLIFE**

### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Inspect facilities and enforce the Act with regards to the standards of care and treatment of wildlife where it is held in captivity
- ⇒ Develop position papers on certain issues relating to wildlife and publicize those papers through the website and media
- ⇒ Define the BC SPCA's role in dealing with wildlife issues and implement consistent practices across the province
- ⇒ Define the BC SPCA's advocacy role with respect to wildlife issues
- ⇒ Consider some form of standardization and accreditation be developed for wildlife rehabilitation centres
- ⇒ Partner with other wildlife and environmental groups in educating the public on co-existing with wildlife
- ✓
- ⇒ Participate in building research and independent studies

**ANIMALS IN ENTERTAINMENT****Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

⇒ Strengthen presence and heighten inspection role of BC SPCA at events where animals are used for entertainment purposes

⇒ Have the board of directors (or committee of the board) develop a position paper regarding the BC SPCA's stand on these issues; use Dr. Fraser and students/graduates from UBC Animal Welfare program as a resource

⇒ Consider advocacy initiatives to educate the public regarding the exploitation of animals in entertainment

**EXOTIC SPECIES****Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

⇒ Partner with the Rainforest Reptile Refuge Society, other exotic animal refuges and the UBC Animal Welfare Program to develop education initiatives aimed at not keeping exotics in captivity as pets

⇒ Survey branches regarding the current handling of exotics received in BC SPCA shelters and identify options for the future

⇒ Consider lobbying provincial government and/or in partnership with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies lobby the federal government to create legislation banning trade in exotic species

**F****FIRST NATIONS****Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

⇒ Develop liaisons with elders/chiefs in First Nations bands to assist in issues of animal investigations and enforcement

⇒ Conduct research regarding models in health and service groups that may work well for the BC SPCA in delivering humane education messages to First Nations peoples

⇒ Develop liaisons with elders/chiefs in First Nations to assist in delivering humane education programs to their peoples

⇒ Include First Nations representatives on BC SPCA Branch Community Advisory Committees where possible

**ACCOUNTABILITY****Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Create a statement of values and commitments in coordination with staff and volunteers which will result in a culture that clearly stands for the welfare of animals
  
- ⇒ Develop consistent policies, programs and services that align with the Society's values, commitments and strategic objectives
  
- ⇒ Develop a process for accountability and transparency. Research the accountability and transparency mechanisms used in other high profit non-profit associations
  
- ⇒ Provide a mechanism for the public to track cruelty investigations, ensuring privacy of individuals while cases are under investigation
  
- ⇒ Demonstrate voluntary sharing of information by convening public information forums in different regions annually

**ADVOCACY****Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Establish and Advocacy Advisory group of academics, veterinarians, and representatives of other organizations to develop and advocacy agenda and to set priorities
  
- ⇒ Actively recruit volunteer advocates
  
- ⇒ Create an advocacy web page that provides volunteer advocates with the necessary information and tools to support BC SPCA advocacy initiatives
  
- ⇒ Develop an advocacy campaign/plan for 2002 around two issues that need change

**HUMAN ANIMAL BOND****Promote health benefits of human/animal bond****Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Investigate how the BC SPCA could adopt animals to longterm care facilities

- ⇒ Establish a process whereby the BC SPCA and the law enforcement community exchange animal/people abuse information in an effort to break the cycle.
- ⇒ Research partnerships with social agencies to create early intervention violence programs
- ⇒ Continue and improve efforts where the BC SPCA could support people with pets who are leaving a physically abusive domestic situation
- ⇒ Continue to build on the partnerships with the Sumas correctional facility to create additional opportunities where unwanted animals can be housed and cared for
- ⇒ Continue to offer education on the therapeutic application of the human/animal bond

## **HUMAN ANIMAL BOND**

### **Promote adoption/pet retention**

#### **Recommendations Urgent Short-term Long-term Ongoing**

- ⇒ Ensure comprehensive animal profiles are posted on cages/kennels of all shelter animals and that all information (history, behavioural and medical) goes with the animal when it is transferred between shelters
- ⇒ Implement adoption screening/counseling programs at all BC SPCA animal shelters to help successfully match people to suitable animal companions and to provide information on all aspects of responsible pet care
- ⇒ Provide adoption follow-up and support services to those who have adopted shelter animals; consider a 1-800 information and support line
- ⇒ Establish standard animal behavioural assessment procedures using the services of qualified animal behaviourists
- ⇒ Determine how the BC SPCA can best support responsible renters in adopting and keeping their pets