

# Animal Advocates Society

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February 20, 2006

Mayor Derek Corrigan and Councillors,  
The City of Burnaby

Re: Anti-tethering bylaw

On January 9<sup>th</sup> I spoke as a delegation from Animal Advocates Society in favour, in principle, of your proposed anti-dog tethering bylaw. But we warned that the bylaw might result in worse treatment of dogs. I said that it was the experience of Animal Advocates that some people were now keeping their dogs in pens and garages after being criticized by animal-loving neighbours for keeping their dogs on a chain or a tether, after being inspected by the SPCA. Staff was asked by Mayor Corrigan if they had any evidence of that and replied that they didn't. You sent the report back to staff with instructions to look into our concerns.

In my opinion, it is unlikely that any agency that does dog control is going to have the manpower or the interest in tracking how many dogs, that can no longer be chained, are then put in pens or garages; nor that any jurisdiction that has adopted tethering restrictions would want to admit that the well-meant law has increased suffering for some dogs.

On Monday February 13th, staff sent a revised report back to you with a recommendation that will prevent car-lot dogs from being chained all day, but not from being kept in a pen all day. There are at least as many car-lot dogs in pens and crates all day, if not more than there are car-lot dogs on chains. This photo is of a 4x8 pen beside the car-lot office that a dog lived in until closing time each day. There is nothing to prevent this in the PCA Act and there will be nothing to prevent this in the proposed bylaw, as the dog had food, water, shelter, the feces was cleaned, and the dog got exercise at night. And yet to permit it does not address the humane concern for mistreated dogs that this council and this bylaw intends. The dog in this pen was large, seriously depressed, and becoming angry, which means it was becoming dangerous. Many people were upset at this dog's treatment. Repeated complaints to the SPCA resulted in no improvement in the dog's life.



The revised report says that “*evidence ...has not been found*” which would support Animal Advocate’s concern that greater cruelty might result if there is no law against keeping dogs in pens or garages instead of on a tether. Staff did not contact us to ask what is the evidence we have, nor were we advised that a revised report was being presented to you. (The online report says that it was mailed to Animal Advocates but we have never received it.) On the likely assumption that staff asked the SPCA, its dog control contractor, if it had any evidence, even anecdotal, staff must have been told by the SPCA that there isn’t any, because staffs’ report to you says there isn’t any. But I know that the SPCA does have evidence, not only because of the number of times I have been told by complainants that the SPCA has been informed and has answered that there is nothing wrong with keeping a dog in a garage, but because of the following:

On January 13, after the Burnaby Now published a story on the concerns Animal Advocates brought to you, we were contacted by a person who told us that a young female Husky named Coco had been outside on a tether at (address removed) 24 hours a day for a year, and that after the SPCA came on a complaint in September 2005, her owners put Coco in the garage on a four foot rope where she has been for almost six months. Complaints of that were made to the SPCA but nothing changed. Coco’s owners told me that the SPCA said keeping Coco in the garage was okay but not on a short tether. That has been confirmed to me in conversations with the SPCA. It appears that when the SPCA was asked for “evidence” of our concerns, it had the evidence but did not tell staff who then were not able to tell you.

Several people were under the impression that the owners wanted to give Coco away and offers were made to adopt her, including by myself, but were refused.



*Coco in the garage – showing the 4’ rope that is hooked to her neck 23 hours a day*

On February 6<sup>th</sup> I made a complaint to the Burnaby SPCA. I made the complaint anonymously because in the past, when I have given my name, the SPCA will not tell me anything. After many phone calls to the SPCA I was told that:

1. One neighbour says the owners treat Coco really well (which ignores all the neighbours who are upset by Coco's incarceration);
2. Coco is exercised every day;
3. Coco is not on a tether in the garage;
4. Being in a garage 23 hours a day is no worse than being alone in the house while the owners are at work.

I can assure you that Coco is on a tether in the garage; I have seen it for myself, neighbourhood complainants see it daily, and it was confirmed to me as recently as Friday the 17<sup>th</sup>. Yet the SPCA denies it.

As for the fourth statement made by the SPCA, people, including myself, have been told that for years by the SPCA. Do they truly think being confined 23 out of 24 hours in a dim garage, on a four foot rope in Coco's case, is no different than waiting inside the family home, free to move and free to choose where to lie down, being part of the family in the morning and after work, and sleeping in the home with the family? Dogs have been bred for companionship for hundreds of thousands of years; they are the only animals that have been; they are the most social of all animals and isolation is the greatest cruelty that can be inflicted on a dog.

Coco is serving a life sentence in solitary confinement. For a short while every day she is freed from her garage prison. She is allowed a brief glimpse of sunshine and of lives being lived. Then it's back into the dark with four walls and a water bowl, a four foot rope hooked to her neck. She is young yet, and has many endless months and years of darkness and loneliness before her. Yet the SPCA actually argues that there is nothing wrong with that. Animal-lovers think it is cruel and cannot agree with the provincial agency charged with preventing cruelty that it isn't.

Chained dogs and loose yard dogs are the most visible of the dogs that are being cruelly isolated; there are many that are being kept in garages, in pens, and even in garden sheds, some of them kept in cages in the garages and sheds so that they don't damage anything. The question must be asked: Why didn't the SPCA tell you about this – especially after you asked for evidence? For fifty years the SPCA has heard every complaint; Animal Advocates only hears a few.

*These two dogs were put in a cage in this shed after complaints to the SPCA that they were tethered.*



The report says:

*“The proposed tethering bylaw is expected to have a positive impact with respect to animal welfare. Many healthy, well socialized dogs are kept in back yards, runs and other enclosures for periods of time. Where there are concerns with conditions in these situations, the Animal Control Bylaw provides for standards of care for animals that are applicable to dogs kept outdoors. These provisions address needs relating to shelter, sanitation, health and exercise for dogs and are administered by the SPCA. The SPCA also enforces the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act which provides authority for relieving distress in animals. In recognizing there are many healthy dogs that are at times kept in some form of enclosure (backyard, run, pen) and with the previously noted regulations currently in place to address inhumane situations, a ban on ‘yard dogs’ is not recommended at this time.”*

Animal Advocates has seen many dogs that live their whole lives in pens, not just for “periods of time”; some being allowed out for once brief period a day, some not ever being allowed out. “Periods of time” is not the problem; the problem with this report is that though it prevents 24 hour tethering, it still permits dogs to be penned their whole lives – in conditions that would not be tolerated if it were any other species of animal. It is permitted to treat dogs worse than livestock. We have reports of complaints to the SPCA of dogs are forced to lie on frozen concrete or mud with no shelter and the only improvement the SPCA is able to make is for the dog to be given some kind of shelter, usually a cold dog house or maybe a tarp over one end of the pen. I don’t think it is your intention for this cruelty to be permitted, but it appears you have not been told of it.

It is disappointing that staff did not think it worthwhile to contact us and that the SPCA approves of keeping dogs in garages, but for Coco’s sake and for the sake of all the dogs in Burnaby (and by extension all isolated dogs in the Lower Mainland and other parts of BC where your bylaw will be imitated), who are living in dark, dirty, lonely isolation, I am heartened that this council wants to see farther than what you have been allowed to see. We want a ban on tethering as much as you do, now so more than ever, as a chained dog in Vancouver hanged itself on its tether last week. But if you adopt a ban only on tethering, then Coco may be put in a cage in the garage and there will be nothing to stop her owners from doing that. The SPCA has said that there is nothing wrong with it, so clearly the SPCA is not going to use the PCA Act to prevent this cruelty and if you do not have bylaw against this, then Coco has no hope at all. It could be many years before Burnaby will look at this issue again, and Coco’s suffering – and the suffering of many other penned and garaged dogs in Burnaby will go on.

Judy Stone, President  
Animal Advocates Society of BC