

PLUS: HOW TO ADJUST TRAINING AS YOUR DOG AGES

AnimalSense

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INSIDE:
**FALL FOR
WILDLIFE**

Tips to make life
easier for wild
animals as autumn
rolls around

The Problem With **PUPPIES**

Post-pandemic, B.C. is in the
midst of a puppy boom that's
verging on a crisis

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FALL/WINTER 2023

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is a not-for-profit reliant on support from animal lovers like you. To explore ways to show you care, visit spca.bc.ca. THANK YOU!

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AnimalSense

BC SPCA SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Dear Friends,

In this edition of *AnimalSense*, we take a closer look at some of the challenges the BC SPCA is facing right now. The number of animals in our care is increasing sharply, especially when it comes to puppies who are either being surrendered or seized pursuant to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. We'll share with you some of the reasons behind this increase, and the impact it is having.

We also take you behind the scenes to share an important discussion about another increase that is impacting our resources: animal protection investigation disputes. When an animal is seized, the owner can file a dispute requesting their return. Once an owner files a dispute, a series of events is set in motion that impacts both the animal and the BC SPCA.

On a lighter note, you will find some great training tips for your dog at any age, plus learn how to make the most of playtime with your cat. Finally, make sure to check out the before-and-after photos of animals who came into SPCA care in dire straits; they are truly heartwarming.

I want to take this time to wish you happy holidays and thank you again for your ongoing kindness. Your caring heart brings hope to the animals who need you most.

Craig Daniell
Chief Executive Officer
BC SPCA

SHELTER FROM THE FLAMES

BY MID-JULY, British Columbia's wildfire season had already been dubbed the most destructive on record, and it only continued to worsen. As animal lovers know, not only do major wildfires cause devastation to wildlife, homes and infrastructure, added strain is placed on pet guardians who face uncertainty for themselves and their animals, especially during an evacuation.

This had an early impact on the BC SPCA in May, when out-of-control fires forced the evacuation of Fort St. John, and we had to quickly move animals in our care out of the city and offer emergency support for guardians. By mid-August, the flames had spread rapidly in Kelowna, Lytton, Kamloops and Shuswap, and the BC SPCA sprang into action, distributing pet supplies, food and accepting requests for emergency boarding for evacuated animals.

From August 17 until September 15, the BC SPCA provided temporary emergency pet boarding to 159 animals whose families were forced to evacuate. Our animal protection officers also responded to 64 calls for help from behind the fire lines, ensuring approximately 207 animals left behind by evacuated families had the necessary food, water and attention. It is because of the hard work of BC SPCA staff and volunteers, and the incredible generosity and kindness of community members, that we were able to ease some of the burden wildfire evacuees were facing. ■



CANADA BANS COSMETIC TESTING ON ANIMALS

THIS SUMMER, the Canadian government passed legislation to prohibit cosmetic testing on animals, joining more than 40 other countries that have taken similar steps. The federal Food and Drugs Act now prohibits testing, selling

cosmetics that rely on animal testing and false or misleading labelling about the testing of cosmetics on animals.

This exciting amendment, combined with the federal government's earlier commitment to phase out animal toxicity testing, will end the unnecessary pain, suffering and death of hundreds of thousands of animals every year across the country.

"These changes were made possible by almost a decade of advocacy from our own organization, as well as our national partner Humane Canada, many other animal welfare organizations, businesses, politicians and dedicated individuals," says Dr. Sara Dubois, senior director of standards, science & policy for the BC SPCA. "We are so grateful to our supporters for helping us achieve this incredible milestone." ■



Once again, wildfire season took a toll on animals and their guardians, and once again the BC SPCA was there to offer support.

The Perfect Match

CARING PAW PARTNER donor Barbara has been an animal lover since she was a child and had a pet budgie. She's always had animals in her life, including several adopted dogs and cats. (Her current kitty is named Muffin!)

Barbara has been a kind, diligent supporter for many years. She often gives to medical causes, likes to play the BC SPCA lottery and purchases tickets for the Wild ARC raffle.

Last year, Barbara saw the story of Poppy, a three-month-old pup who was found in a planter box outside an SPCA community animal centre after being left there in the middle of the night.

Barbara was so moved by Poppy's story that she offered to match every dollar donated for



Three-month-old pup Poppy inspired animal lover Barbara to dig deep and give back, ensuring she'd receive the best possible care.

her medical emergency fund up to \$5,000. Within two days, thanks to Barbara's thoughtful matching gift and her fellow animal lovers, more than \$32,000 was raised for Poppy and other animals requiring urgent medical care.

Today, Poppy is full of joy in her new forever home. We are so grateful for Barbara's commitment to animals as a Paw Partner! ■



B.C. Premier David Eby announces the province's \$12 million in funding to help build BC SPCA shelter replacements in Vancouver, Cowichan, Prince George and Fort St. John.



EXTREME SHELTER MAKEOVER

IN JUNE, the provincial government announced \$12 million in funding to help build BC SPCA shelter replacements in Vancouver, Cowichan, Prince George and Fort St. John. Although the BC SPCA

currently operates 42 facilities across the province and many are showing their age, these four require the most urgent replacement, based on animal needs and condition.

"This significant support from the province is greatly appreciated. It helps us better care for and protect vulnerable animals in these communities where our aging facilities are having a direct impact on the level of service we can provide," says Craig Daniell, chief executive officer of the BC SPCA.

SPCA SUMMER CAMPS ROCKED IN 2023

THIS SUMMER, the BC SPCA welcomed nearly 1,000 kids and teens to camps in nine locations around B.C. “With a focus on fun and learning, campers were educated about animal welfare issues, had their appreciation for animals nurtured, and built an understanding for the interconnections between animals, people and the environment,” says Gillian Ickert Plett, BC SPCA humane education manager.

These lessons are woven into high-energy outdoor games, guest appearances from experts and take-action projects designed to empower kids to make a difference in their communities. Campers also spend their days

doing crafts and projects to help animals, connecting with their peers, making new friends and, of course, spending time with some of the animals in BC SPCA facilities.

What’s more, this fall, the BC SPCA’s education team has been back in schools, connecting with students and educators via in-person and virtual school presentations and teacher workshops. Learn more at spca.bc.ca/teachers. ■



THE FUNDING WILL SUPPORT:

- **VANCOUVER ISLAND** – \$1 million toward replacing a 27-year-old facility with an animal behaviour centre on the existing BC SPCA Cowichan site.
- **NORTH PEACE** – \$1 million toward a new permanent shelter in Fort St. John after serious structural issues were identified.
- **VANCOUVER** – A \$7 million contribution to the cost of a new campus including an animal centre, a veterinary hospital and education centre.
- **NORTH CARIBOO** – \$3 million to help develop a new facility in Prince George that will also provide regional services for the Cariboo and Northern B.C. ■

The BC SPCA is still working to secure additional funds to support the replacement of these facilities.

PETSECURE DONATES FUNDS & PEACE OF MIND



SINCE FIRST SUPPORTING the BC SPCA in 2009, Petsecure has provided dog and cat adopters with six weeks of free pet insurance as part of our adoption package. Petsecure also donates to the BC SPCA for every adoption trial that is activated and for every activated trial that is converted to a full Petsecure policy. These trials give peace of mind to new pet parents, resulting in fewer animals being returned to our shelters during the early stages of adoption, and creating more forever homes.

In 14 years of partnership, Petsecure has provided more than 8,000 complimentary insurance trials each year and a payout of approximately \$30,000 in claims on these free trials.

Every year, there are new advancements made to veterinary care, and more treatments are available than ever. While these treatments can be life-saving, they can also be expensive. Through the BC SPCA’s partnership with Petsecure, we know just how important it is to confirm you have the necessary insurance for your pet.

When the unexpected happens, Petsecure takes care of your financial concerns and lets you focus on what’s important. To learn more, visit petsecure.com. ■

PILLARS OF THE **CARE** COMMUNITY

Lisa Fuller and Bryce Herman are animal lovers who work closely with the BC SPCA Kamloops & District. When asked why they devote their time to the SPCA, Lisa replies: “We both love animals and when I became involved with leading the capital campaign for the Kamloops BC SPCA, I had much more exposure to the great work the BC SPCA does in our community and across our province.”

Together, they sit on the Kamloops Branch Events Committee, where they help plan the Fur Ball and the Tail Gate Series.

Lisa and Bryce’s involvement with fostering really took off in 2018, when Lisa was leading the High Five Capital Campaign to build the new Kamloops & District Community Animal Centre.



Primarily fostering kittens, they both love caring for animals with special needs. In fact, Bryce is somewhat of a “cat whisperer,” often called upon by the BC SPCA.

“It is honestly very difficult for us to give them up as we fall in love with every one of them for their uniqueness,” says Lisa. “It’s probably a good thing we are in a townhouse with pet restrictions.” ■



Lisa Fuller and Bryce Herman are two of the BC SPCA’s most devoted animal lovers.

ARE YOUR PETS **REGISTERED?**



YOUR PETS may be microchipped, but are they actually registered?

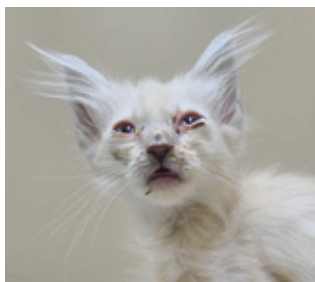
“During public events this summer, we found that out of 330 microchipped dogs and cats, 20 per cent of them were not registered in any common database in North America,” says Priscilla Cheung, manager of the BC SPCA’s Pet Registry. “To have a lost pet reunited with you quickly, it’s crucial your microchip is registered and that your contact information is up to date.” The BC Pet Registry is an invaluable identification database to help return lost animals. Both microchips and tattoos can be registered. All microchips are trace-

able internationally via the American Animal Hospital Association. “This partnership means that no matter where a pet is lost, we can trace that animal back to you,” says Cheung. “If you are unsure of your pet’s registration status, you can register with us at any time. All you need is the microchip number or tattoo code to start the online registration process.”

For a one-time \$45 fee, your pet will be protected for life, and you will be supporting the essential work of the BC SPCA. Visit bcpetregistry.ca for more info. ■

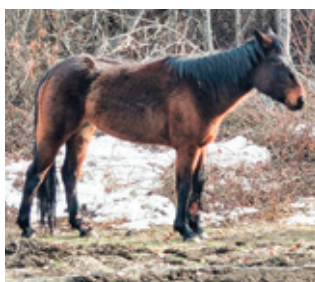
HAPPY ENDINGS

What a little love can do! Inspirational tales of recovery, kindness and forever homes



ONE TOUGH KITTY

PINKY was one of 21 cats and eight kittens surrendered into the BC SPCA's care from a property in Powell River. Many appeared underweight and had obvious eye issues, but of all these cats, Pinky was in the worst shape. This sweet, tiny kitten was immediately brought to a veterinary clinic for treatment. She was so severely dehydrated that a blockage had developed in her intestines that required five days of intensive care. She also had a congested nose, most likely due to untreated upper respiratory infections. It was a dire situation, but Pinky is a fighter, and after some time on the mend, she started behaving like a normal, happy kitty again. To make this story even sweeter, Pinky has since been adopted and is living her best life in a forever home!



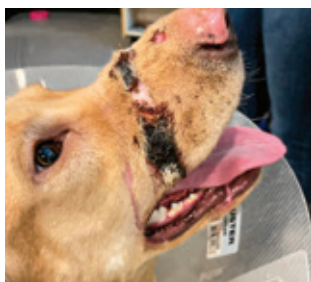
A PROMISE BROKEN, A PROMISE HEALED

PROMISE was seized from a rural property. This beautiful mare was found with a lame left front leg because of a severe chronic wound that was embedded with dirt and debris so deep the bone was visible. This devastating injury was only one of Promise's many health issues. She was also dangerously underweight and had two superficial, infected wounds on her hind legs. She had no doubt been in pain for months by the time she was rescued, and the veterinarian's prognosis was severely guarded. But she was up for the fight. Gentle and kind, Promise was sent to one of the BC SPCA's fosters to heal from her injuries, patiently allowing her bandages to be changed. Now, she is with a foster who is helping Promise learn to become comfortable with human touch and handling. Skittish at first, she loves running and playing with the other horses at the stable and when she is ready will be available for adoption.



GROUNDNED BABY SONGBIRD LEARNS TO SOAR

AFTER FINDING a tiny, unflighted fledgling bird hopping around on a busy road near their campsite, a Good Samaritan thought it was too dangerous for the baby to be left there and contacted the BC SPCA's Wild ARC. Wild ARC's rehabilitators determined that, due to the high number of people, cars and dogs where the baby was discovered, it was not safe to attempt to reunite him with his parents. The Townsend's warbler, a small insectivore, required a highly specialized diet and care, including frequent feedings. Luckily, the warbler thrived at Wild ARC and when he was reliably self-feeding and fully flighted, he was moved outside into a large enclosure with birds of comparable size and behaviour to get ready for release. Two weeks later, with the perfect body and feather condition for an adult, he flew from his box and re-entered his natural environment.



RESCUED LAB BECOMES LOCAL CELEBRITY!

BUTTERCUP, a yellow Lab mix suffering from suspicious injuries, was found running loose in Comox. Someone had cruelly taped Buttercup's muzzle shut, leaving cuts across her face. When she arrived at the BC SPCA, she was immediately taken to a veterinarian, where they determined that her rear left leg had been broken in two places, had healed incorrectly and would need to be amputated. She was also underweight and required treatment for giardia. Even though Buttercup had been through so much, she was still sweet and loving to everyone who met her.

Buttercup's story was in the local news and attracted the attention of Claudia, who knew she just had to meet her! Buttercup's new mom had always wanted to give a tripod dog a loving home, and luckily she had the time to devote to this hard-luck Lab's rehabilitation. Buttercup (now Cami) spends her days at the beach with her best friend Addie, a chocolate brown Lab, running with her new sister Brie and basking in the spotlight whenever she goes into town with her mom. ■



The Problem With PUPPIES



Call it too much of a good thing. B.C.'s recent puppy boom is turning into a province-wide crisis

resources is a growing problem.”

Compared to the same time last year, the total number of puppies in the BC SPCA's care has increased by 75 per cent, from 702 in 2022 to 1,225 in 2023 so far. So, what exactly has changed in a year? “We are feeling the effects of everything from the shortage of veterinarians to backyard breeders who started during the pandemic when selling puppies was ‘easy money’ and are now surrendering them,” says McBride. While overall intake numbers have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels, the BC SPCA is concerned that the trend will continue and undo decades of work controlling animal overpopulation.

The importance of spaying and neutering pets to decrease

the number of unwanted litters has been heard loud and clear by guardians. But the lack of veterinarians in B.C. has meant delays in many dogs getting these essential procedures, or often not getting them at all, causing a boom in accidental litters. “The problem keeps compounding,” says McBride. “There are more puppies in the community than there are available homes. Today, if your dog accidentally had puppies, I’m not sure you could give them all away – let alone sell them.”

This lack of demand is felt in BC SPCA's animal centres as well. “We aren’t seeing the immediate surge of applications we used to when we posted a puppy available for adoption,” says McBride. “Some

We know what you’re thinking. How can anything this adorable be a “problem”? Just look at them!

“Of course, puppies themselves are not the problem,” says Adrienne McBride, the BC SPCA's senior director of community animal centres. “But the number of puppies in our care and the impact that it is having on our



puppies stay in care until they are eight months and older, especially up north, where the lack of vets is at a crisis level. These puppies are having to be transferred to animal centres in the Lower Mainland to get adopted.”

Another contributor to the increase is opportunistic backyard breeders who have not only been adding to the number of puppies in BC SPCA care, but also adding to the workload of our animal protection officers. “A high number of calls come through our animal helpline from concerned citizens about breeders who are not taking proper care of their animals,”

“The problem keeps compounding. There are more puppies in the community than there are available homes. Today, if your dog accidentally had puppies, I’m not sure you could give them all away – let alone sell them.”

McBride explains. “Each call starts an investigation process – and some of these cases end with the breeder surrendering the animals to the BC SPCA or the dogs being seized pursuant to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.”

Once the puppies are in our care, the urgent search for a foster home begins. “Puppies don’t have all of their vaccines to help them fight off diseases, and with so many dogs coming into our animal centres with unknown medical histories, puppies are at a high risk of getting sick or worse,” says Kim Monteith, the BC SPCA’s manager of animal welfare.

Monteith adds that a foster home provides a pup with a loving environment, socialization and one-on-one attention, which are essential for their physical and behavioural health. “Fosters are life savers,” says Monteith.

Alas, finding an appropriate foster can take a lot of time and effort. “A foster home for the odd litter of puppies is easier to find

but when animal centres need foster homes for five, six or seven litters at once, it can be very difficult,” says McBride. “The average home and family is not set up to take care of eight large-breed puppies and their mama.”

With just under 1,000 puppy mouths to feed so far this year, not to mention the costs of their medical care, the BC SPCA’s resources are being stretched. “When you consider the fact that some of the puppies we get are very young and need weeks of care before they are weaned, while others are orphaned and require bottle feeding before adoption, the costs can add up quickly,” McBride explains. “Unfortunately, there is no quick fix for this problem. We can’t solve the veterinarian shortage and we can’t stop opportunistic breeders from having litters.”

The BC SPCA continues to advocate for legislation that would bring regulations and oversight to the dog-breeding industry. “The decision made by the B.C. government earlier this year to double the number of subsidized seats for B.C. veterinary students is a huge step forward for animal welfare across the province,” says McBride, “but given the scale of the vet crisis, it still isn’t sufficient.” In the meantime, the BC SPCA will continue to do our best for puppies and all other animals who come into our care.

If you want to help puppies like these, consider becoming a foster or encourage your friends and family who are looking to add a dog to their family to visit the local SPCA. Those interested in becoming a foster can apply at spca.bc.ca/foster. ■



FALL for Wildlife

Five tips to keep wild animals safe as the weather changes

The fall brings stunning changes in colour, cooler temperatures and pumpkin-spice *everything*! It also signals to wildlife that winter is coming and they need to prepare for food scarcity and colder temperatures. But animals don't have to go it alone in the fall and winter months – there are many ways humans can step up to help our wild neighbours.

TIP #1: EITHER COMMIT TO OR DITCH HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS

Nectar feeders provide a food source for hummingbirds and on occasion other non-migratory birds like black-capped chickadees in the winter. While these tools can be helpful, they can also be harmful if precautionary steps are not taken. Feeders must be cleaned regularly to prevent fungal and bacterial growth and checked daily

in cold weather to ensure they don't freeze. If you're not ready for this commitment or don't have someone to cover for you when you go away on vacation, removing your feeder now gives hummingbirds time to find another food source before temperatures plummet.

TIP #2: DRIVE WITH CAUTION

As the days get shorter, use extra caution on the road to keep yourself and wildlife safe. It's important to be alert for animals who are active at dawn and dusk, such as deer in rutting season, as well as nocturnal species like owls who hunt near roads for rodents. Also, remember to pay attention to wildlife warning signs, stay within the recommended speed limit and be vigilant by scanning road shoulders. Don't honk or flash your lights at wildlife; this

could cause them to panic and bolt or freeze in place. And never throw food or garbage out the window – not only is this bad for the environment, but it also attracts animals to roadways and increases the chances of a collision.

TIP #3: CHECK YOUR WINDOWS

While fall marks an exciting time for birdwatchers as annual migration begins, it is also a peak season for window strikes. You can help keep birds from hitting your windows by using specialized decals, coloured tape or drawing on them with window markers or a bar of soap to break up reflections. Feel free to relax your cleaning schedule, too – a dirty window is a safer one! For more information, including what to do if a bird strikes your window, visit spca.bc.ca/news/striking-bird-window-collisions.



TIP #4: GIVE THEM PLENTY OF SPACE

Wild animals expend precious energy searching for food, seeking shelter and simply surviving the winter. If you get too close or startle them, they may need to use their scarce energy reserves to get away from you. Maintain distance from any wild animals you encounter while out and about. When walking dogs, keep them on leash and don't allow them to chase wildlife. Keep cats indoors to prevent predation on birds (and to protect them from frostbite and other winter dangers).

TIP #5: RODENT-PROOF YOUR HOME

Although some might see them as pests, rodents are important! Mice and rats move indoors when the weather gets cold, so try to make your house less rodent-friendly.

Prevention minimizes the need for inhumane traps and rodenticides that cause rodents to suffer slow and painful deaths before passing the poison on to predators such as owls. Remove attractants by securing garbage and compost, keep both pet and human food indoors, and clean up any fallen fruit or spilled birdseed. Assess the exterior of buildings, remove debris and trim plantings – rodents can use these as cover to get closer to your home. Mice and rats can fit through surprisingly small holes, so locate and seal potential entry points under porches and in walls, foundations, crawl spaces and sheds. Check for signs of rodent activity regularly throughout the season and make repairs promptly. ■

For more information on successfully co-existing with wildlife, visit spca.bc.ca/urban-wildlife.

WILDLIFE-IN-FOCUS

THIS YEAR'S PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

CONGRATULATIONS to Andrew Harnden of North Vancouver and June Szasz of Vancouver, who received top honours for their images in the BC SPCA's 15th annual Wildlife-in-Focus photography contest! As ever, the shutterbugs competed in two categories: Backyard Habitats (highlighting our special relationship with wild animals in our own backyards) and Wild Settings (featuring animals in their natural habitats). In addition to the top three picks in each category, the judges awarded honourable mentions to a number of incredible photos, while a People's Choice Award was selected by popular vote. The contest raised more than \$10,000 to help the BC SPCA's Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre (Wild ARC) care for injured and orphaned wildlife.

Visit spca.bc.ca/wildlife-in-focus to view the photos. The winning shots have been made into a desktop calendar available for purchase through the BC SPCA's online store (shop.spca.bc.ca).

PHOTOS:

1ST PLACE IN BACKYARD HABITATS: Andrew Harnden (North Vancouver), *Raccoons*

1ST PLACE IN WILD SETTINGS: June Szasz (Vancouver), *Snow Geese*

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD: Anabelle Wee (Richmond), *Short-eared Owl*

IN DISPUTE:

BETWEEN SEIZURE & FOREVER

After an animal is removed from an unsafe environment but before adoption, the owner has a chance to dispute the seizure — a necessary yet increasingly problematic step in the protection process

While the BC SPCA's role of investigating allegations of animals in distress is well known to the public, a lesser known but equally important step in this process is taking place more frequently than ever: responding to disputes following an investigation.

"When an animal protection investigation determines it is in the best interest of the animal to be removed from the owner, the BC SPCA will seize the animal pursuant to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. That could be because the animal requires treatment, the environment is not suitable or the owner is either unwilling or unable to relieve the animal's distress," says Marcie Moriarty, the BC SPCA's chief of protection and outreach services. "The Act sets out procedures that must be followed once the animal comes into our care, which includes allowing the owner to seek the return of their animals. That process is called a dispute."

Once a dispute is filed, it triggers a series of very resource-taxing events for the BC SPCA. And in the past three years, for reasons unknown, the number of disputes has increased significantly.



"A dispute starts with an exchange of information between the BC SPCA and animal owner reiterating the reasons the animal was seized," says Moriarty. "This can include medical records from veterinarians who treated the animal when they came into the BC SPCA's care and other details from when the warrant was executed." Moriarty adds that the owner can offer reasoning for why it is in the animal's best interest to be returned to them. "All of the information submitted is thoroughly reviewed before a decision is made," Moriarty



continues. "Depending on the circumstances, an animal may be returned under an 'agreement of care' outlining all changes required by the owner to ensure the animal is not at risk of

From puppy mills to hoarders to any number of other unsafe living situations, BC SPCA protection officers intervene on behalf of all sorts of animals in need. But seizure is just the beginning of what can be a very fraught process to ensure safety and well-being.



experiencing further distress. If we make the decision not to return an animal to their owner, the owner is provided with the reasons leading up to that decision.”

If unsatisfied, the owner can appeal to an outside tribunal, the BC Farm Industry Review Board (BCFIRB). A hearing takes place where both parties present their case, with the onus on the owner to prove to the BCFIRB why the animal should be returned to them despite the BC SPCA’s decision otherwise.

“One of the costliest impacts of a dispute is that we must, by law, hold the animals in our care until the dispute is concluded and a judgment is made,” Moriarty explains. “In some cases, that means hundreds of animals in our care, unable to be adopted. This has a massive impact on our resources, not to mention the toll it has on the animals.”

Although the owner is responsible for the expenses

associated with the care of the animals throughout the dispute, in practice that rarely occurs.

“Unfortunately, in most cases we are not able to recoup the costs because of the owner’s inability to pay. That is part of why the increasing number of disputes is such a financial burden for the BC SPCA,” says Moriarty.

Moreover, many of these disputes come from repeat offenders. “I can’t give many details because it is an open investigation, but right now we are dealing with a dispute for the seizure of animals from someone who has prior animal cruelty charges,” Moriarty explains. “It can be very frustrating. We have also recently seized a number of animals from backyard breeders with whom we have a history, and we are expecting disputes in those cases as well.”

So, what can be done? “It is an access to justice issue,” says Moriarty. “While we understand and appreciate the need for that



“ One of the costliest impacts of a dispute is that we must, by law, hold the animals in our care until the dispute is concluded and a judgment is made. In some cases, that means hundreds of animals in our care, unable to be adopted.

aspect of the legislation, it’s frustrating when we see cases from repeat offenders, especially where there is significant animal suffering or intentional infliction of harm with almost no chance of the animals being returned to the owner.” She adds that, if there is an opportunity to re-evaluate the process, the BC SPCA would support a review of how disputes are handled for repeat offenders. “We recognize the need for an appeal process, but the financial and resource drain of repeat offender disputes, not to mention the possible increased suffering of the animals, makes it a challenging process for the Society.”

If there is a silver lining, it’s that the BC SPCA’s decisions not to return an animal are being upheld by the BCFIRB at the same rate as before. This means that, despite the delay, eventually we’re generally still able to place these animals in loving forever homes. ■



TRAINING

Through the Ages

As your dog gets older, how they learn – and how best to teach them – changes

Dogs have different training needs at every stage of life. Knowing the best ways to help your furry friend thrive as their mental and physical conditions evolve is an important part of keeping them happy and healthy. These expert tips from BC SPCA AnimalKind-accredited trainers will help give your dog, whatever their age, the best life possible.

PUPPY SOCIALIZATION

Bonnie Hartney of Ocean Park Dog Training describes the socialization period in puppies (around 3 to 14 weeks) as “a time they are primed for learning.” Hartney recommends providing positive and varied experiences for your puppy. “Imagine your future together. Would you like to attend social gatherings, go on road trips, sit at a café or visit the doggy groomer?” asks Hartney. Whatever your goal, provide gentle and positive exposure to these settings early on and “offer pups tasty treats to build good feelings about each new experience.”

Hartney also recommends avoiding dog parks. “Instead, enroll

in puppy socialization classes with opportunities to meet and play with other puppies in a safe and controlled setting.”

PUPPY CHEWING

Puppies love to chew – it is a normal part of their development. Sandy Reichert of Daisy Dog Training says, “Puppies use biting and chewing as a way to play, explore and engage with the world.” Focus on teaching appropriate chewing behaviour. “Be prepared by having a safe, puppy-



proof environment. Put away shoes and remove all electric cords. Supply lots of age-appropriate toys, chews and long play ropes.”

Redirect puppies to chew on approved items to positively reinforce desired behaviour and minimize destructive habits. Chewing behaviour decreases with age, so have a strategy to get you through the “bitey” months.

UNDERSTANDING TEEN BEHAVIOUR

“One thing you may notice with your adolescent dog is everything in the world becomes more exciting than you,” says Hilary Webster of Two Blue Tails Dog Walking & Training. They may become easily distracted and exhibit new fears or excitability.

“Adjust your expectations for your dog during this time. This helps keep your relationship and bond strong,” says Webster. Understanding these behavioural changes and adapting your training



ADULT MANNERS

“Mental and physical stimulation are necessary for a calm and well-behaved dog,” says Lisbeth Plant from

Cowichan Canine Behaviour & Training. Behaviours like barking and growling can intensify if they haven’t been addressed when younger. Leash reactivity and other unwanted habits may also develop if socialization is lacking. Plant explains that when a dog reaches the adult stage, training needs depend on personality and how much mental stimulation they are receiving. “Continue rewarding desirable behaviours throughout your dog’s life. Bad behaviours that are consistently unrewarded will likely become less of a problem,” says Plant.

ADULT DOG PLAYTIME

Playtime is not just for puppies! Per Sandy Middleton, from Best Friends Dog Training and Behaviour: “Play enriches your relationship and is a powerful expression of connection, cooperation and fun between people and dogs.” She suggests:

- **TOY PLAY** Avoid fighting for possession of the toy. Exchange it for food in a fun way by tossing treats for the dog to chase and take the toy. You can also teach a release-on-cue or exchange for a second toy.
- **FOOD PLAY** Toss food in different directions, initiating a fast-paced game of chase and hunt. Some dogs love chasing it for a distance, and others will give up if you toss it too far. Know your dog.
- **SOCIAL PLAY** This takes place without food or toys. It’s just you

and your dog playing together, enjoying each other’s company. Experiment to find the games and interactions your dog likes best.

TRAINING TO ENGAGE SENIORS

“Senior dogs have specific needs requiring attention and care,” says Bianca Steinmetz from Bianca’s Dog Training and Behavioural Consulting. Contrary to what many believe, training is not just for pups and can be an effective tool in caring for seniors.



Foremost, keep overall health in mind. “If you are concerned your dog isn’t moving around as much or seems in pain, check with your vet first,” says Steinmetz. Use training to encourage gentle movement. “Set up a safe and enriched environment where your dog can explore and interact with various objects and activities at their own pace. The goal is to encourage the dog to move gently and without force, reducing the risk of injury or stress.” ■

For help creating a training plan catered to your dog’s age and needs, consult an AnimalKind-accredited trainer. Find one now at animalkind.ca.



methods will help you and your dog. “This is a time when they need play, social opportunities and lots of patience!”

DOGGIE BODY LANGUAGE

Valerie Barry of Dog Partners emphasizes that understanding how your dog communicates is essential. “The most valuable things for pet parents to learn are dog body language and dog behaviour, especially as it relates to their dog,” says Barry. This helps you recognize when they are overwhelmed, scared or anxious and may need more support or additional training.



Independent though they may seem, felines require attention, stimulation and playtime just like dogs do.



JUST KITTEN AROUND

The underrated importance of playtime with your cat

There is a long-standing belief that, unlike dogs, cats are low-maintenance, independent pets. In fact, to stay happy and healthy, cats need an interactive, stimulating indoor environment, which requires an investment of time and effort on our part as their guardians.

“We’re used to taking time out of our day to walk our dogs or play fetch with them in the backyard,” says Meghann Cant, manager of companion animal welfare science & policy for the BC SPCA. “We need to get in a similar habit with our cats.” One underappreciated means of providing stimulation is playtime, which “engages your cat’s

mind and body and enhances the bond you share,” says Cant. “Even starting at just five minutes of daily play can improve your cat’s welfare – and your own.”

While kittens are known for their playful antics, all cats will play when given the right opportunity, no matter their age. The key is to understand your cat’s specific likes and dislikes so that you can provide the best possible opportunities. “Learning what entices your cat takes trial and error, which is why it’s so important to set time aside each day to play with them,” Cant explains.

Some clues that your cat might be in the mood to play include sudden erratic movements and

spontaneous interaction with objects around your home. Here, you are likely to see classic feline stalking behaviour: legs crouched, head lowered and eyes fixated on the object. “Take advantage of these signs to start a play session with your cat,” says Cant. “It doesn’t need to be a long one – short bursts of activity are actually best.”

Why short bursts? It all comes back to hunting. Compared to dogs, domestication has changed cats relatively little. Like their wild relatives, they have evolved as predators to search for, stalk, chase, pounce on, catch and manipulate their prey. Play can mimic this hunting sequence, which is brief but frequent in the wild.

“Playing keep-away games with your cat provides a rewarding outlet for their natural hunting behaviours,” says Cant. She suggests moving a wand toy through the air to mimic flying prey and along the floor to simulate ground prey scurrying away. “Be sure to allow your cat to catch the toy from time to time. A successful ‘hunt’ will help keep them interested in the game.” Similarly, tossing a small toy, such as a ping-pong ball or fake mouse, down a hallway can trigger their predatory instincts.

You can also involve food in your daily playtime. Food-dispensing toys, such as balls that drop kibble as they roll, can be effective for food-motivated cats in particular. Some even allow you to modify the level of difficulty so that you can present your cat with varying mental and physical challenges.

Felines like novelty, so provide a variety of toys and rotate them regularly. “When choosing toys for

your cat, remember that most are designed to appeal to people, not necessarily to cats,” says Cant. “For cats, qualities such as texture are more important than appearance.” Toys made with feathers and fake fur mimic prey characteristics and may be more successful at promoting play. Some cats enjoy large, soft toys that can be raked with claws and bitten. Regardless of which kind you choose, safety is essential. Any toys with parts that can be accidentally ingested — like bells or string — should only be used under supervision and put away between playtimes.

Catnip can also encourage play, but according to Cant there are some factors to consider when using it. The quality of catnip can vary, so buying good quality, organic catnip free from pesticides and fillers is best. Toys already infused with catnip might contain a poorer quality product that does not elicit as strong a response. Instead, Cant


suggests “marinating” the toys in a tub of dried catnip or purchasing toys with refillable catnip pouches so that you can control the quality.

“Some cats react to catnip by behaving aggressively,” warns Cant. “If you’re unsure how your cat will react, test it out first.” This can be accomplished by using small quantities of catnip that are easily removed in an area of your home they can choose to avoid. Also, when exposed to catnip too often, cats can become less reactive to it. So, rather than leave the catnip toys out all the time, Cant suggests storing them in a sealed container out of reach, only bringing them out for a special playtime.

Ultimately, even a few minutes of play will liven up your cat’s day and improve their overall well-being. As a bonus, says Cant, the daily interaction will also strengthen your relationship. “When you take time to focus on your cat, you’ll find that both your lives are enriched.” ■



Playtime enriches your cat's day-to-day life by stimulating their natural searching, stalking, chasing, pouncing and catching instincts.



“When, where and how long they tolerate petting varies from cat to cat. The key is to pay close attention to body language.

ASK THE SPCA

WE ANSWER
YOUR QUESTIONS
ABOUT COMPANION,
FARM AND WILD
ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR

My old cat used to love it when I scratched the base of his tail. But I was petting my new cat there the other day and she tried to bite me! Why was she so aggressive?

Your cat's reaction, known as petting-induced aggression, is actually a common one. While not yet fully

understood, it's believed that cats have a sensitivity threshold beyond which petting becomes uncomfortable – much like tickling for humans.

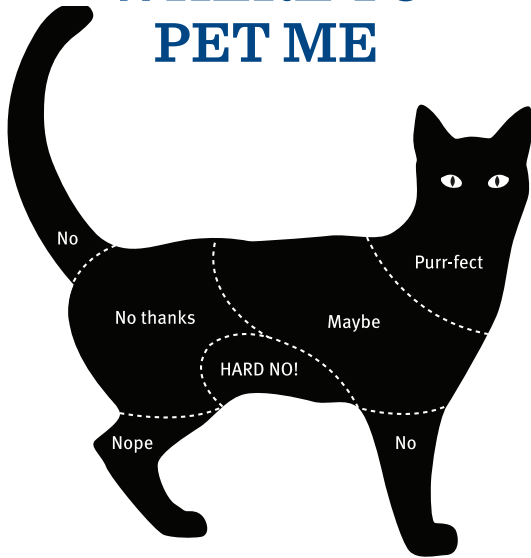
Not all cats have the same threshold. When, where and how long they tolerate petting varies from cat to cat. The key is to pay close attention to body language. Before lashing out at you, she may tense up, flatten her ears and twitch her tail, and the skin along her back may ripple. If you see these warning signs, stop touching your cat right away. Wait until she solicits petting again by rubbing against you.

When petting, use short, small strokes. Focus on her cheeks and chin and between her ears and eyes – areas where cats typically groom each other. Avoid scratching her near the tail, back legs or stomach. Again, by watching your cat's behaviour, you can find out on which parts of her body she prefers to be touched. And remember to keep it brief: most kitties would rather be petted in short bursts than in marathon sessions.

Above all, never punish your cat, physically or verbally, for showing aggression during petting. Doing so will only cause her to be fearful and possibly increase the intensity of her reaction in the future. Also, should petting-induced aggression suddenly develop, have your cat checked out by a veterinarian. Pain can make cats more sensitive to touch. Emotional state can also play a role; if she's feeling stressed from a change in her environment, for example, her tolerance for petting may be lowered.

Your new cat may never enjoy the same petting as your old cat, but with patience, the two of you can find a happy medium. To learn more, visit spca.bc.ca/i-need-help-with/pet-care-behaviour.

WHERE TO PET ME



My neighbour found an injured crow and wants to take care of the animal themselves. I'm not sure that's a good idea. What can I tell them?

Just as veterinarians treat our companion animals, when wild animals are in trouble, they require specialized care from a professional. Although it may be tempting to care for a wild animal yourself, professional wildlife rehabilitators will make sure patients receive the treatment they need to recover for life back in the wild.

HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO BRING INJURED, ORPHANED OR SICK WILDLIFE TO A WILDLIFE REHABILITATION CENTRE:

■ The government permits wildlife rehabilitation centres in B.C. to care for wild animals. It is illegal to keep or care for wildlife without a permit, though Good Samaritans can transport animals to a wildlife rehabilitation centre within 24 hours.

■ Caring for a wild animal is not like caring for a pet. Wildlife rehabilitation staff are highly trained and knowledgeable about minimizing stress and habituation, species-specific diet and housing needs, and have access to equipment to assess a wild animal's health and provide appropriate treatment.

■ Without proper care, wild animals can suffer from unnecessary stress, malnutrition, pain or internal injuries. Professional wildlife rehabilitators can provide treatment in a non-stressful, healing environment essential for recovery.

■ Wild animals can carry diseases and parasites. Wildlife rehabilitators know how to minimize the risk of transmission and keep themselves, the animals and the people around them safe.

■ Wild animals can suffer from severe injuries that are untreatable. In these cases, professional wildlife rehabilitators can recognize and end the suffering for those unable to recover.

If you find a wild animal you think may be in trouble, the first thing to do is visit the BC SPCA's website (spca.bc.ca). From what to do if you find a seal pup to how to help a bird who has flown into a window, we have a wide variety of resources to help.

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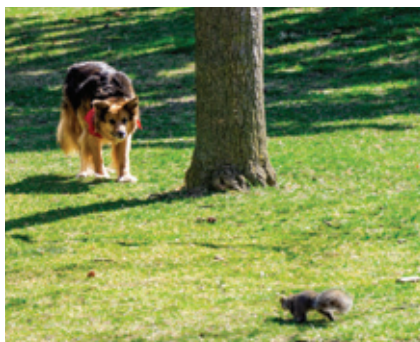
“ Prey drive is an instinctual response to hunting for food and it is triggered quickly in dogs. It is a base emotional response that, once activated, overrides the rational part of the brain. Dogs won’t even hear you calling them once they are in this highly aroused emotional state.

pictures or videos of the animal will help our staff to advise on next steps. Transporting an animal in need directly to a wildlife rehabilitation centre will give them the best chance of recovery and our Animal Helpline operators can help you find the nearest one.

We all have a shared responsibility to care for wildlife and ensure they get the help they need.

I’m concerned that my dog has a high prey drive and may hurt other animals. What should I do?

While many dogs have some level of prey drive, certain dogs have been specifically bred for prey-related abilities. Herding dogs are bred to round up other animals, hounds to flush out prey and terriers are bred to hunt “vermin.” Most companion dogs express their prey drive by fetching, chasing or playing tug-of-war. Their emotional reaction and behaviour generate moderate arousal,



which shouldn’t worry most guardians.

Yet, in some dogs, the prey drive elicits a powerful response that needs to be carefully managed. Prey drive is an instinctual response to hunting for food and it is triggered quickly in dogs. It is a base emotional response that, once activated, overrides the rational part of the brain. Dogs won’t even hear you calling them once they are in this highly aroused emotional state.

The key to management is keeping them in a mindset where they can still reason and not allow instinct to fully take over. Behaviour indicators include your dog fixing their gaze on another animal. They will tighten their body muscles and assume a stalking posture.

Another indicator is when they attempt to chase and lunge at moving objects such as cars. They may also be obsessed with chasing after other animals.

Managing that prey drive involves redirecting focus before their limbic system takes over their ability to reason. Work on the “leave-it” command by turning them away from potential triggers. Toss treats in the opposite direction to lower their arousal and lead them away. Continue to use positive reinforcement methods — praise and treats — to redirect your dog’s attention whenever you see a common trigger. This will help to dissociate triggers and prevent the dog from fixating. Also, you should be continuously working on making your recall command reliable so the reward for coming to you is greater than chasing a cyclist. Alas, some dogs with really high prey drive may need to be on a leash at all times when not in an enclosed area. If your dog isn’t progressing, consult an AnimalKind trainer. Learn more at animalkind.ca. ■

The Suffering of Flat-Faced Dogs in a Warming World



This summer once again brought concerns about our changing climate to the forefront of our minds.

From devastating forest fires in Canada to scorching heatwaves in Europe, the impact of these environmental shifts has become increasingly difficult to escape. Both humans and pets feel the effects. The rising global temperatures pose a particularly acute threat to flat-faced dog breeds.

The biennial Canine Science Forum hosted this summer in Budapest delved into emerging challenges for dog welfare. A key topic was safeguarding dogs from hardships brought about by our planet's warming trends. While a lot can be done, including refraining from walking dogs on hot pavement and avoiding strenuous exercise during extreme heat, specific characteristics of certain breeds can also affect welfare in a warming climate. The responsibility of dog breeders to ensure the well-being of the animals they produce was a pressing issue discussed at the Canine Science Forum, with conversation centred around brachycephalic breeds – dogs with flat snouts, including English bulldogs, French bulldogs and pugs.

The surging popularity of

French bulldogs worldwide is a significant welfare issue. These endearing flat-snouted dogs are undeniably cute, but scientists and veterinarians have significant concerns for the health of these animals. Indeed, flat-snouted dogs endure a great deal of suffering due to their facial structure. They also pose substantial financial burdens on their caregivers.

Research has shown that French bulldogs, along with other brachycephalic breeds, suffer from severe oxygen deprivation due to their abnormal facial anatomy. This respiratory issue also makes them less efficient at regulating their body temperature during hot weather, significantly elevating their risk of heatstroke. Shockingly, up to half of all French bulldogs are afflicted by a condition known as Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome, which can manifest as laboured breathing, oxygen-deprivation-induced fainting and sleep apnea. On average, French bulldogs have a drastically shortened lifespan, often living for as little as 4.5 years.

The breathing problems experienced by flat-faced dogs

are exacerbated by rising global temperatures and poor air quality. Smoke from forest fires, for example, seriously hinders their ability to breathe.

It is crucial to protect French bulldogs and other brachycephalic dogs from the hazards of wildfire smoke and extreme heat.

Equally crucial is the effort to educate potential adopters about the importance of choosing a healthy dog breed free from facial deformities. This education and public demand can play a pivotal role in changing dog breed standards and breeding practices.

We have an ethical obligation to ensure that breeders produce dogs who are physiologically functional and in good health. ■



Dr. Alexandra (Sasha) Protopopova is the BC SPCA Chair in Companion Animal Welfare in the UBC Animal Welfare Program. The program, initiated in 1997 by the BC SPCA and other community partners, works to improve the welfare of animals through "research, education and public outreach."

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a brighter future for vulnerable animals.



Clayton Norbury
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