

PLUS: THE BC SPCA 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

AnimalSense

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A NEW ERA FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

With shelters still overflowing post-pandemic, BC SPCA explores fresh strategies for outreach, education and care

INSIDE:
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DON'Ts**

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INSIDE

THE BC SPCA

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

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On the cover

In the wake of the pandemic and other shifting global conditions, shelters across British Columbia and the world are dealing with a troubling influx of surrendered pets.



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BCSPCA

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!**

AnimalSense

BC SPCA SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

Spring/Summer 2024

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 1

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PUBLISHED BY



CANADA WIDE MEDIA LIMITED | canadawide.com

AnimalSense is published for The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals by Canada Wide Media Limited
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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Dear Friends,

Spring brings with it new growth and fresh air – which makes it the ideal time for new ideas and fresh ways of looking at animal welfare. In this edition of *AnimalSense*, you'll read how animal welfare organizations around the world are changing the ways we support both the animals in our care and their guardians, and the impact that is having on everything from adoption processes to education.

We also delve into the importance of pet identification and registration, sharing the story of one cat who found her way back home to her loving family thanks to a permanent ID. Also, don't miss the "Happy Tails" column, featuring the rehabilitation of a severely injured sharp-shinned hawk and a heartwarming update on Maya, the pregnant pit bull terrier who had been left out in the cold, tethered to tires. Finally, a staple of our Spring/Summer edition, the BC SPCA's Annual Report provides a comprehensive overview of the Society's essential work over the past year.

As we look back on 2023, you'll see the challenges our facilities across the province have faced with the steady increase of animals coming into care. While intake at shelters shows no signs of slowing down, I'm very proud of how well the Society was able to work together to support the animals who need our care the most.

Your loving kindness and steadfast support makes so much possible.

Craig Daniell
Chief Executive Officer
BC SPCA

THANKS *a Million!*

FOR NEARLY THREE DECADES, the BC SPCA Vancouver Hospital Trust Fund has rallied compassionate animal enthusiasts to raise funds for subsidized veterinary care. Initially dedicated to the BC SPCA Vancouver Animal Hospital, their reach now extends across the province, aiding veterinary needs in places like Penticton, Kamloops, Kelowna and Prince George.

“The Trust is committed to supporting and amplifying the BC SPCA’s work to preserve the lives and protect the well-being of companion animals in B.C.,” trustee Shirley-Anne Blackadder explains.

In 2024, that unwavering dedication has propelled them past the \$1 million mark, funding



veterinary services provided by the BC SPCA. The Trust Fund’s impact is felt through crucial initiatives, such as funding spay/neuter services, prioritizing veterinary care for shelter and low-income animals, and subsidizing veterinary care for those in need.

Amid veterinarian shortages and rising costs, these contributions ensure happier,

healthier lives for animals across the province, underscoring the indispensable partnership between the Trust and the BC SPCA in advancing animal welfare.

The BC SPCA extends loving gratitude to the Vancouver Hospital Trust Fund, recognizing their pivotal role in supporting countless animals! ■

STAY CONNECTED



HELP US CREATE A BETTER

world for animals – get the latest BC SPCA news delivered right to your mailbox when you subscribe. Through *Anim@ls* e-news and our breaking news alerts, we make sure you are first to know what’s happening with animals in B.C. and how you can make a difference for companion, farm and wild animals who need your help. *Anim@ls* also offers valuable health tips for your pet, the latest research on animal behaviour, as well as heartwarming tales about animals who have been rescued thanks to your generous support.

Sign up today at spca.bc.ca/get-updates. You can also visit spca.bc.ca/newsletters to sign up for BC SPCA updates specifically for kids, teachers and those interested in learning more about wildlife and farm animals. Or, if you’re feeling social, follow the BC SPCA on Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok! ■



BECOME A MEMBER!

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

by becoming a Member of the BC SPCA. Members help direct the vision and mission of the BC SPCA, and under our amended Bylaws have been accorded enhanced rights and privileges, including the right to directly elect the Board of Directors. Visit spca.bc.ca/membership for more information or to apply for/renew your membership. ■

Two kids find *purr*-pose in GIVING BACK

WHEN WE REACHED OUT to Jenn to offer our heartfelt thanks for her family's generosity as Paw Partners*, she was quick to give all the credit to her children, Kenzie and Evan – who actually suggested they make the donation. The two kids have a deep love of animals and have expressed it through not only charitable giving, but by caring for their own adopted cat, Jet. Both siblings wish for all animals to find loving homes – and as Kenzie adds, “Lots of food and belly rubs!”

How did these children turn out to be so very *paw*-some? That's where the credit goes back to mom Jenn and dad Geoff, who themselves were raised to know that generosity must extend

beyond the family, and that giving back benefits everyone. As Jenn explains: “Allowing our kids the opportunity to choose where to donate each year gives them a little bit of an introduction to what we hope will be a lifelong tradition of giving.”

Thanks to this teaching, Evan and Kenzie are rescuing suffering animals and helping them find their forever homes – just as Jet has found hers with them. Jet, who was once quite timid, is now a well-fed, chatty member of the family. She lets everyone know it's time to wake up by meowing in their faces and she selflessly ensures that the comfiest spots on the couch are kept nice and warm by spending most of her time



Evan and Kenzie with their little fur buddy Jet.

laying on them.

Thank you, Jenn, Geoff, Kenzie and Evan for being such a *paws*-itive force for animals!

**Paw Partners are a committed and compassionate community of animal lovers who give \$500 within a year to help innocent animals in need. ■*



Working to improve FARMED ANIMAL WELFARE

IN AN EXCITING STEP towards improved welfare and protections for farmed animals, the BC SPCA recently participated in a committee formed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to review the farmed animal welfare framework in British Columbia.

This Farmed Animal Welfare Advisory Committee worked from 2022 to 2023 to develop nine recommendations, touching on training, transportation and processing sectors, along with integrating and prioritizing

farmed animals in emergency response. The recommendations were submitted to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food for review in early 2024. “For many years, the BC SPCA has called on the government to conduct a review of B.C.’s farmed animal laws and practices to ensure the safe, humane treatment of farmed animals while still supporting the viability of B.C.’s farming industry,” explains Marcie Moriarty, chief of protection and outreach services with the BC SPCA. “The BC SPCA

FARMED ANIMAL WELFARE RECOMMENDATIONS:

▶ A new government enforcement agency

A new inspection and enforcement function to enforce the PCA Act for farmed animals and additional enforcement abilities, such as fines, to incentivize compliance. This agency would become responsible for responding to cruelty complaints and conducting proactive inspections of commercial farms.

▶ Proactive inspections of farms

Some farming industries have industry-led inspection programs, but others are never inspected. Proactive government inspections of farmed animal welfare would be an important first in British Columbia.

▶ Improved transport of farmed animals

Work to enhance training, enforcement and communication

among those involved in animal transportation to reduce animal stress and improve welfare, including the prioritization of farmed animals on BC Ferries routes to reduce waiting times for these animals during transport.

▶ Improved animal welfare at slaughter

Commit to strict oversight of slaughter to ensure laws and regulations are followed, as well as strengthening regulations and providing training on welfare and handling to animal handlers.

▶ Farmed animals in emergencies

Collaboration among government agencies, farmers, service providers, emergency responders and others to ensure farmed animals are cared for and protected in emergencies and from the impacts of climate change.

is wholly supportive of the Committee's recommendations, provided they are read in totality and actioned collaboratively, and we firmly believe that a well-funded, proactive inspection system is critical for better animal welfare across all agricultural sectors involving animals."

One of the key recommendations is the creation of a new government-funded agency to enforce the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act as it pertains to farm life. This new enforcement agency would work collaboratively and collectively with the BC SPCA, who would continue enforcing the PCA Act for companion and exotic animals, as well as wildlife in captivity.

Although the recommendations made by the Committee require



extensive cross-ministerial and industry collaboration, requiring time to both evaluate and implement, the BC SPCA is grateful to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for making these important assessments on behalf of the province's farmed animals. ■

YELLOW DOG *has its day!*

FOR MORE THAN NINE YEARS,

Yellow Dog Brewing has been a friend to the BC SPCA, donating a total of \$135,000, while also supporting other BC SPCA events and campaigns that have raised more than \$1,500,000.

Last year, we wanted to return the favour by nominating Yellow Dog for an Association of Fundraising Professionals Giving Hearts Award for Outstanding Small Business – and they won!

Accepting the award, Melinda Coghill, the Port Moody-based brewery's founder, said: "Yellow Dog has a strong commitment to the communities it calls home. We want to use that ability as a company to give back in meaningful initiatives. The work that I do with the SPCA is very personal to me. Loving animals has been in my blood since a very early age and I've been supporting them for as long as I can remember – both personally and corporately. We opened Yellow Dog, named after our beloved fur baby Chase, and it was important for my husband and I both to support

them in a larger scale."

The BC SPCA is so proud to have amazing supporters like Melinda and her team in our communities. ■



Yellow Dog Brewing founder Melinda Coghill.



The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)

Shifting Shelter Approaches

With intake at BC SPCA facilities on the rise post-pandemic, it's time to re-evaluate our approach to animal welfare

Animal welfare organizations and rescues have been sounding the alarm about the increased number of animals coming into care since the pandemic. In fact, according to Shelter Animals Count, an animal welfare-focused information database who recently expanded their data collection efforts into Canada, 2023 was the third consecutive year where shelters saw too many animals coming in and not enough adoptions.

For the BC SPCA and other organizations across North America, this trend has continued into 2024. The Society has already witnessed a 3.6 per cent increase of animals in care compared to last year. While we are still light-years ahead of where we were 100 years ago – when British Columbians first began advocating for companion animals as the province's urbanization led to the increase and euthanasia of thousands of strays every year – we are at risk of regressing to a time when protecting animals wasn't as important to British

Columbians as it is today.

“When I started working for the BC SPCA in the '80s, there was such a different sentiment towards companion animals compared to what exists today,” says Eileen Drever, senior officer, protection & stakeholder relations. “Back then, animals were often seen as disposable. If someone lost their dog, they just went out and got a new one. At times, 400 to 500 dogs would come through the shelter in a single month. It was a really challenging time to be working in an animal centre.”

Drever adds that a big reason those conditions started to change is that most people now consider their companion animals to be members of the family. In fact, recent polling* conducted by the BC SPCA shows more than four in five Canadians agree that dogs and cats are sentient beings who can experience emotions such as joy, pleasure, fear and pain.

In that case, why are shelters starting to be overrun once again?

“Pandemic circumstances, a resurgence in irresponsible breeding and lack of access to









veterinary care are definitely contributing factors to what we're experiencing with more animals coming into our centres," explains Adrienne McBride, senior director, community animal services. "The most challenging thing for the BC SPCA is that the 'fix' for a lot of these factors is pretty outside of our control."

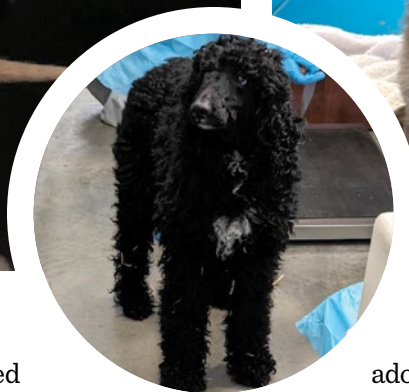
To minimize some of the impacts from the growing veterinary shortages felt across the province, the BC SPCA has advocated for more government-funded seats for B.C. students at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine – B.C.'s regional vet school in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – 20 of which were granted for the 2022-2023 academic year. The Society also provides outreach services, like the pet food bank and emergency boarding, to help keep families and

their beloved pets together during challenging times.

"It's daunting when you're working in an animal centre feeling the pressures from more and more animals, but the challenges the BC SPCA is facing also present us with an exciting opportunity to have a good look at the way we're doing things," shares McBride. "There are some really interesting things being explored by animal welfare organizations across the world right now."

It has long been a strategy in the business world to proactively identify and prevent issues – rather than trying to clean up the mess after the fact, while missing the underlying causes. This is a focus we're starting to see in the not-for-profit sector as well, particularly in animal welfare when it comes to understanding the cycle of increased animals

“While the perception of companion animals has changed for the better, that doesn't explain the increase of animals now coming into care all these years later.”



coming into care compared to the decreasing numbers of adoptions taking place.

For example, when Dogs Trust Ireland began exploring more deeply the causes of increased dog

“A review of the surrender calls received from the public showed a gap between the available materials and what guardians truly needed.”

surrenders to the organization following the pandemic, they were surprised at what they learned. Despite having a longstanding and

well-established education program for canine guardians, a review of the surrender calls received from the public showed a gap between the available materials and what guardians truly needed. So, the fact-finding “Happy Dog” project was launched. Following more than 6,000 responses from a mix of existing supporters, dog owners and non-dog owners, the Dogs Trust Learning Academy was developed with four types of content tailored for the different information and learning needs identified. This innovative project is currently in development and piloting, expected to be completed by spring 2025.

Following the pandemic, when physical distancing and other important safety measures made it difficult to visit an animal centre to adopt, many organizations have also looked to build out foster-to-

adopt and home-to-home adoption programs. While these types of programs are not appropriate for all animals, under the right circumstances they can provide a less stressful way for animals to find their forever homes by limiting touch points with a shelter – which also creates more space for the most vulnerable animals who truly need to be under the direct care of animal centre staff.

As the BC SPCA prepares to enter its own new Strategic Plan in 2025, the organization continues to explore further opportunities to keep animals and guardians together by addressing the real causes of surrenders and looking for new ways to protect the highest standards of animal welfare. ■

**ResearchCo. poll conducted for the BC SPCA April 3-5, 2024 (n=1,000, margin of error +/-3.1%, 19 times out of 20)*

PERMANENT *Peace of Mind*

Keep better tabs on your tabby and your dog with permanent ID

When it comes to reuniting lost pets with their families, two things are equally important – permanent identification like microchips and making sure that identification is registered.

In 2023, more than 4,200 cats and more than 2,250 dogs who came into the BC SPCA's care as strays could not make their way home due to a lack of permanent identification or identification that was unregistered, incorrect or out of date. That represents 83 and 39 per cent respectively of all lost animals.

"Sadly, it can take just one wrong digit in a guardian's cell phone number to keep pets from getting home," says Priscilla Cheung, manager of the BC SPCA's Pet Registry program.

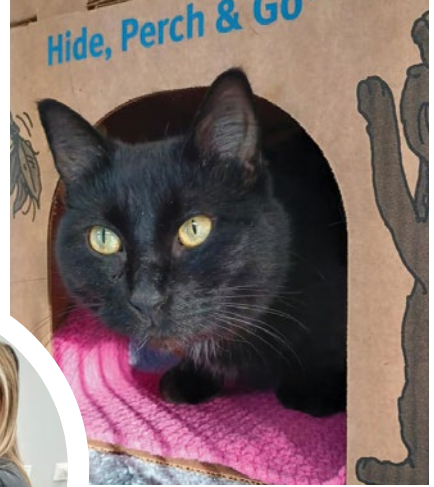
For an example of just how important permanent identification is, consider the story of Cleo – an indoor cat who slipped out of an open door while her family was in the process of moving. Her guardians frantically scoured the neighbourhood, but Cleo was nowhere to be found. After weeks of searching and worrying, they finally got the call they'd been hoping for – Cleo was safe at the BC SPCA North Peace community animal centre.

"When a stray animal comes

into the BC SPCA's care, one of the first things we do is scan for a microchip or examine the animal for a tattoo," says Adrienne McBride, senior director of community animal centres. "Cleo's registered tattoo ID made it possible for centre staff to contact her guardians to let them know she had been found." The family was shocked to learn how far their little kitty had strayed and the reunion was an emotional affair – for all involved. "When they arrived at the centre and Cleo saw them, her whole demeanour changed," says McBride. "She was so happy."

Indeed, pets in the home aren't always wearing collars, so relying on contact information on a tag is risky. "Collars can also break, or your pet can wriggle out of them," says Cheung.

Guardians should check the databases where their pet's microchip is registered and confirm their contact information is up to date. "If you are looking for some guidance on how to ensure your pet is registered, guardians are encouraged to contact the BC SPCA's Pet Registry," says Cheung. "We do not require that your pet is registered with us to offer assistance. Our No. 1 priority is to ensure all pets



Don't rely on a collar tag. Permanent ID like a microchip is your best bet to get a lost pet home.

have registered permanent identification so we can help lost pets be reunited with their families."

In 2023, the Pet Registry hit the impressive milestone of having more than 200,000 pets registered in the system. Moreover, net proceeds from the Registry help fund BC SPCA community outreach initiatives like low-income spay/neuter programs and pet food banks. Since 2019, BC SPCA's Pet Registry has subsidized the spay and neuter of more than 10,000 animals across the province and donated more than 6,000 microchips to low-income communities.

For more information, visit bcpetregistry.ca. ■



BCSPCA 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends: We are pleased to present the 2023 Annual Report of The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA). Your ongoing support helped the BC SPCA to assist 135,764 animals last year. Together we combatted cruelty and neglect through the work of our protection officers, and gave shelter to thousands of homeless animals. Our pet food bank program helped to keep pets and their guardians together in the face of increasing food insecurity concerns and the BC Pet Registry worked to ensure that every lost dog and cat has the best chance of finding their way home. In the face of increasing demands for our services, your caring commitment to the work we do allows us to continue functioning as a vital safety net for not only animals, but their guardians across British Columbia. On behalf of all of us at the BC SPCA, thank you for your thoughtful and compassionate partnership as we work to improve the lives of the most vulnerable animals in this province.

CRAIG DANIELL
Chief Executive Officer
BC SPCA

MARK MONTEMURRO
Chair
BC SPCA Board of Directors

protect

IN 2023, THE BC SPCA'S protection officers touched the lives of more than 42,000 animals. From checking on farm animals left behind fire lines in the Okanagan to the rescue of neglected dogs and puppies from irresponsible breeders, your continued support means our officers are there to keep animals safe and ensure that people who inflict suffering are held accountable through cruelty investigations and the subsequent recommendation of charges. ■

Working remotely

In January of 2023, an effort requiring extensive transport coordination led to the rescue of 10 malamute mix dogs by the BC SPCA from a remote property in Northern B.C. after their guardian was hospitalized and could no longer care for them.

"These poor dogs were tethered outdoors with no visible food or water," says Eileen Drever, senior officer, protection and stakeholder relations for the BC SPCA.

"Thankfully, we were alerted to the situation and our officers were able to reach the property to provide food and water, and to do an initial health inspection on the dogs." Drever adds that when these malamutes saw our protection officers



approach, they began barking frantically – so excited to see people.

"The dogs ate voraciously – once they had been fed, they were very happy and friendly," says Drever.

The BC SPCA then contacted the guardian at his hospital in Edmonton, who asked to surrender the animals into SPCA care, as he was not sure when he'd be able to return and he had no one else to look after them.

That's when the real difficulties began.

"Because of the remoteness of the property and the snowy winter conditions, we

had to come up with a creative solution to transport them to Prince George as quickly as possible," says Drever. The Society was able to hire a cargo plane from Upper Valley Aviation, which had space to fly six of the dogs in crates from Fort St. John to Prince George. The remaining four were transported to Prince George by the BC SPCA's Drive for Lives program.

"The dogs were in good health overall, but they had some dental disease issues, overgrown nails and matting," Drever explains. "We were just relieved to get them off that remote property and somewhere safe and warm where they could receive the ongoing care and attention that they needed."

By mid-April, all 10 of the dogs had moved out of SPCA care and found their forever homes. ■

7,841
ANIMAL CRUELTY
INVESTIGATIONS

41,175
ANIMALS ASSISTED
BY BC SPCA PROTECTION
OFFICERS

2,795
ANIMALS REMOVED FROM
DANGEROUS OR
NEGLECTFUL SITUATIONS

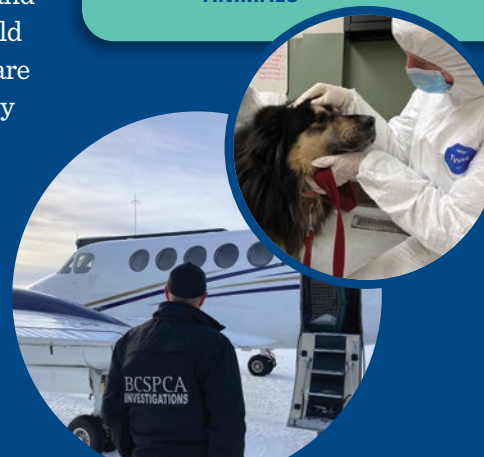
80,752
CALLS TO THE BC SPCA
PROVINCIAL HELPLINE

627
SKILLED AND CARING
BC SPCA STAFF

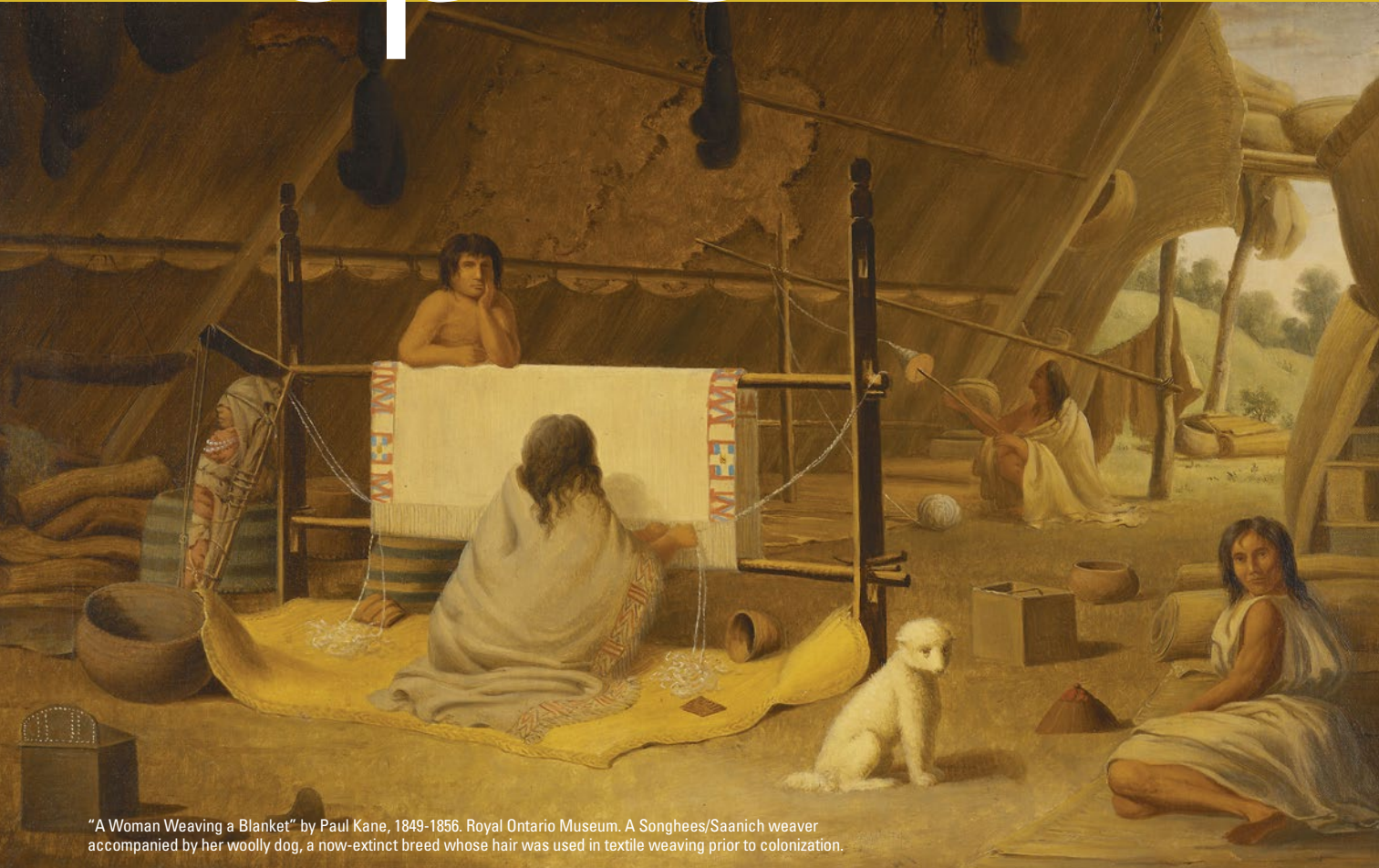
3,369
DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS
WHO HELP US EXPAND OUR
SERVICES TO ANIMALS

231,378
VOLUNTEER HOURS
PROVIDED

40
BC SPCA FACILITIES
DEDICATED TO THE CARE
AND PROTECTION OF
ANIMALS



inspire



"A Woman Weaving a Blanket" by Paul Kane, 1849-1856. Royal Ontario Museum. A Songhees/Saanich weaver accompanied by her woolly dog, a now-extinct breed whose hair was used in textile weaving prior to colonization.

THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS, the BC SPCA can advocate to build a better world for companion, farm and wild animals. In 2023, we continued our work on the Farmed Animal Welfare Advisory Committee; nine recommendations were presented to the Ministry of Agriculture in March of this year. In November, a ban on canine devocalization procedures came into effect – the latest addition to the list of harmful cosmetic procedures banned in B.C. We also continued our advocacy work on issues including live horse export and pet-friendly housing. ■

16,140 KIDS ENGAGED IN OUR SUMMER CAMPS, SCHOOL CLUBS, WORKSHOPS, KIDS CLUB AND SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

213,702 VISITS TO OUR "TAKE ACTION" ADVOCACY WEB PAGE

8 MAJOR ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS LAUNCHED AND 26 POLICY SUBMISSIONS CREATED TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ANIMALS

286,768 SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS HELPING US SPREAD THE WORD

8.6 Million WEBSITE VISITS FOR NEWS AND EDUCATION ON ANIMAL ISSUES

Lessons to *LIVE* by

In partnership with Canadian education company Live It Earth, the BC SPCA Humane Education team launched phase two of its *Dogs* curriculum in 2023 – an online learning experience for elementary school educators and their students. The program is designed to teach kids how dogs communicate and view the world; how the BC SPCA helps canines and other animals; and how we can all best share in healthy communities with the dogs around us. Additionally, students can explore lessons focused on the multifaceted relationships between Indigenous peoples and dogs, and diverse ways in which dogs are a part of many First Nations worldviews.

The new materials include three videos focused specifically on Indigenous

“The program is designed to teach students how dogs communicate and view the world around them.

perspectives. Hul’q’umi’num cultural storyteller Jared Qwustenuxun Williams tells of how the first dog, Swuq’us, came to be; Cree Nation member Leah Arcand discusses how her organization, Save Rez Dogs, helps First Nations communities support dogs; and finally, Senaqwila Wyss, from the Squamish Nation, explains the importance of the woolly dog to Coast Salish culture.

So far, the *Dogs* program has seen more than 20,000 engagements with its various videos, lessons and resources. Visit liveit.earth to learn more. ■

Giving DOGS *a voice*

In April 2022, with the help of thousands of our supporters, the BC SPCA called on the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia (CVBC) to enact a bylaw ban on canine devocalization.

Devocalization – or “debarking” –

short- and long-term health complications, not to mention the stress they experience from not being able to communicate properly. At the same time, it does nothing to address the underlying reasons why dogs bark in the first place.

“Devocalization – or ‘debarking’ – involves partially or fully removing the vocal cords to muffle or eliminate barking.

involves partially or fully removing the vocal cords to muffle or eliminate barking. This invasive surgery puts canines at risk of

Last fall, veterinarians across the province voted overwhelmingly in favour of the debarking ban, which came into immediate effect this



Debarking is now officially a problem of the past.

past November.

“Together, we raised our voices so that dogs could keep theirs,” says Meghann Cant, BC SPCA manager of companion animal welfare science & policy. “Thanks to the ban, dogs in B.C. will no longer experience unnecessary pain and suffering from this procedure.”

Debarking is the latest addition to the list of harmful, unnecessary cosmetic procedures banned in British Columbia, including ear cropping, tail docking and declawing. “We are so grateful to our supporters for taking action to help end practices like this, as well as to the College and veterinarians across B.C. for achieving such an important animal welfare milestone,” says Cant. ■



MOOOvin' ON UP!

An update to the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle will soon improve the lives of the more than 1.4 million cows in Canada. The Code includes new requirements for housing, handling, pain control and health, among other considerations.

cows are tied to a stall where they can lie down and stand up but cannot turn around or walk. The good news is that nearly all cows in B.C. can already freely walk around the barn, as there are only a few tie-stall farms in the province. With this change to the Code, by 2027 all tie-stall-housed cows will need to be let off their ties

“ There is also a ban on building new barns that do not allow daily exercise. This likely means no new tie-stall barns will be built – a major win.

The BC SPCA, along with more than 5,800 people concerned about cow welfare, suggested changes to a draft Code in 2021. Those comments led to improvements in the final version.

A notable change was made to housing for cows and calves. Most dairy farms in Canada (73 per cent) use tie stalls. In this type of housing,

so they can move freely.

There is also a ban on building new barns that do not allow daily exercise. This likely means no new tie-stall barns will be built – a major win.

Lastly, dairy calves are often housed individually for the first eight weeks of life. By 2031, farmers must house them in pairs by four weeks of age – reducing stress and allowing the calves to develop social skills. ■

care

LAST YEAR, staff and volunteers assisted more than 135,000 animals across the province. Together, we gave 17,729 homeless animals emergency care and shelter; found loving homes for more than 11,138; rehabilitated more than 2,000 wild animals; and provided 14,914 spay and neuter surgeries. We also assisted guardians fleeing violent domestic situations and natural disasters with more than 9,600 nights of free emergency pet boarding – in addition to our charitable veterinary services, pet food banks and other outreach programs.

As an evidence-based organization, the BC SPCA maintains close partnership with academic institutions to ensure our veterinary, sheltering and rehabilitation services are informed by leading-edge science and research. ■



Despite the pandemic starting to wane, the BC SPCA's pet food banks were needed more than ever in 2023.

Support you can bank on

The BC SPCA significantly expanded its pet food bank outreach offerings during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when many guardians needed a bit of extra support to continue caring for their beloved four-legged companions. Despite COVID triggering that expansion, the end of the pandemic did not lessen the need for support from the BC SPCA's pet food banks as much as one might believe.

Last year, the cost of living continued to rise

significantly as British Columbia was once again ranked the most expensive Canadian

“It's always a powerful feeling to know we can help ease that burden during an unbelievably stressful moment for these families.

province to live in. Guardians were not immune to the impact of inflation, with the costs of pet food, supplies and

even veterinary care experiencing similar increases to other consumer goods.

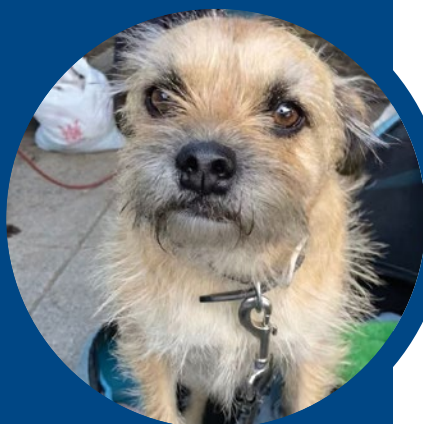
“We've really seen that when someone comes to the BC SPCA's food bank for help, they've often already exhausted other

options and are only left with the difficult decision to care for themselves or for their animals. These are people who care so much about their furry family members that they'd forgo their own meals to make sure their pets are taken care of during hard times,” explains Diane Waters, outreach specialist for the BC SPCA.

BC SPCA food banks provided 717,621 meals to dogs and cats in 2023. Compare that to 633,502 meals provided in 2022 and 537,875 meals provided in 2021, and it

becomes clear inflation remains a big challenge for pet guardians.

Yet Waters offers a reminder that it is not just inflation leading to increased demand for food and supplies. “British Columbia has also seen more major weather events impacting residents over the past few years. When a significant wildfire or flooding situation strikes the province, the BC SPCA jumps into action to ensure those who are evacuating have what they need for their pets. It’s always a powerful feeling to know we can help ease that burden during an unbelievably stressful moment for these families.” The BC SPCA distributes pet food and supplies through 35 animal centres and 150 organizational partners across the province, including social housing spaces, municipal food banks and other non-profits. ■



Opioid puppies



Three lucky pups are happy and healthy after nearly overdosing on dangerous narcotics.

This past December, three puppies were found living in a cramped space, covered in feces and garbage, some tethered to a table. Alas, the story gets even more heartbreaking – they were all exposed to harmful narcotics and stimulants, and at the time of their rescue were overdosing. Moose, the largest of the pups, would need four rounds of Naloxone just to keep him alive.

“Unfortunately, when people are struggling with issues like drug addiction, their animals suffer too,” says Eileen Drever, the BC SPCA’s senior officer, protection and stakeholder relations. “Although we fully support the removal of these puppies, we recognize it is difficult for people who can’t take care of themselves to care for someone else.”

The dogs were immediately taken to a veterinary clinic. Bear, the smallest, was limp and could not walk. Hawk was emaciated and ran around the clinic in a frenzy, overly energetic. The veterinarian determined that the puppies had been exposed to opioids, cocaine, methamphetamines and amphetamines. They would remain in the clinic overnight, where they could be closely monitored. As the drugs moved out of their system, Moose and Hawk began to eat, play and behave like normal puppies. Bear would have a longer road to recovery. The good news? All three are now thriving in their forever homes! ■

135,764
ANIMALS ASSISTED
ACROSS B.C.

17,729
HOMELESS ANIMALS
PROVIDED WITH
EMERGENCY CARE AND
SHELTER

717,621
MEALS PROVIDED TO
ANIMALS THROUGH
THE BC SPCA PET
FOOD BANK PROGRAM

17,964
ANIMALS TREATED
THROUGH BC SPCA
VETERINARY SERVICES

11,138
ANIMALS ADOPTED
INTO NEW LOVING
HOMES

2,165
LOST ANIMALS
REUNITED WITH
GUARDIANS

2,132
INJURED AND
ORPHANED WILDLIFE
REHABILITATED

5,334
ANIMALS TRANSPORTED
THROUGH THE
BC SPCA DRIVE FOR
LIVES PROGRAM

9,600+
NIGHTS OF
FREE EMERGENCY
PET BOARDING

14,914
SPAY/NEUTER
SURGERIES FOR
HOMELESS AND
COMMUNITY ANIMALS

204,000
REGISTRANTS IN THE
BC PET REGISTRY TO
REUNITE LOST ANIMALS
WITH GUARDIANS

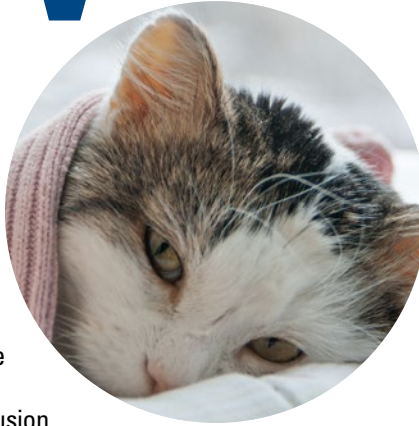
35
DOG TRAINERS AND
2 PEST CONTROL
COMPANIES
ACCREDITED THROUGH
THE BC SPCA
ANIMALKIND PROGRAM

grow

ENSURING WE ARE ABLE TO HELP ANIMALS

for as long as they need us means we have a responsibility to ensure the future strength of the BC SPCA through developing financial resilience, effective governance, efficient use of technology, and robust employee and volunteer programs. In 2023, the BC SPCA dedicated significant attention to areas of cybersecurity, new technologies to streamline operational and business practices, and matters relating to mental health support, equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation, as well as focusing on leadership development.

Since 2013, The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has been among the elite group of Canadian organizations credited by Imagine Canada, the national umbrella for charities and non-profits. Imagine Canada accredits using a nationwide set of shared standards designed to demonstrate compliance in five fundamental areas: financial accountability and transparency; board governance; fundraising; staff management; and volunteer involvement. ■



Safety in FOSTERS

In periods of hardship, dedicated guardians often prioritize the safety and well-being of their animals over their own needs. Recognizing that up to 65 per cent of people experiencing intimate partner violence are afraid to walk away from an abusive situation due to concern for the pets they must leave behind, the BC SPCA launched a pilot program in 2021 called Safekeepers.

Safekeepers offers confidential, emergency boarding for the animals of anyone fleeing interpersonal violence. This allows individuals to prioritize caring for themselves with the knowledge that their beloved pets are safe, happy and healthy. As a recent client of the Safekeepers program shared: "I'm glad the foster is enjoying

their time with my fur babies! I'm happy they get to have a safe vacation after all they've done for me. Things are finally looking up for us."

Last year, the Safekeepers program provided 902 nights of foster care for pets in need. Meanwhile, the number of fosters qualified to look after animals who have suffered through violence in the home grew to an incredible 52, with dozens more currently undergoing training.

Another client had such a positive experience, despite the terrible situation they were facing, that they now aspire to become one of these specialized fosters: "This program has been so amazing. I hope one day I can be healthy enough to volunteer with you all." ■

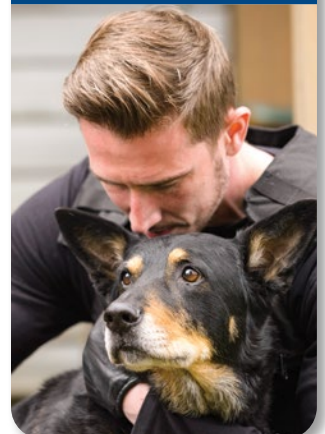
Leadership TEAM

BC SPCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Mark Montemurro**
Chair
- **Rochelle Stevenson**
Vice Chair
- **Catherine Ruby**
- **Harj Dhaliwal**
- **Cheryl Pelletier**
- **Victoria Brydon**
- **Rebecca Levi**
- **Nichola Wade**
- **Erin Egeland**
- **Sydney Redpath**
- **Ashley Thandi**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- **Craig Daniell**
Chief Executive Officer
- **Lorie Chortyk**
Chief Communications Officer (on leave)
- **Shoni Field**
Chief Development Officer
- **Marcie Moriarty**
Chief, Protection & Outreach Services
- **Craig Naherniak**
Chief, Social Change
- **Parm Takhar**
Chief, Animal Care Services
- **Emily Thorner**
Chief Financial Officer/Chief Technology Officer
- **Jolie Wist**
Chief People Officer



Your Generosity in Action

FOR EVERY **DOLLAR** YOU GAVE IN **2023**,
HERE IS HOW YOU HELPED THE ANIMALS



EMERGENCY SHELTER & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Provided a temporary home for **17,729** abandoned, injured and abused animals, helped injured and orphaned wildlife and assisted **41,715** animals in the community.

38¢



CHECK-UPS & MEDICAL TREATMENT

Ensured animals in BC SPCA care get a health check and are spayed or neutered. Sick or injured animals will receive further treatment.

19¢



ANIMAL PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS

Conducted **7,841** new animal protection investigations. The BC SPCA is the only animal welfare organization in B.C. with the authority to enforce laws related to animal cruelty.

9¢*

*This represents direct investigation costs only.



PREVENTING FUTURE SUFFERING

Helped stop the cycle of violence and made our communities safer for animals through humane education and advocacy.

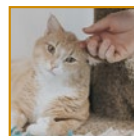
6¢



MAKING FRIENDS FOR THE ANIMALS

Allowed more than **135,760** animals to be helped this year thanks to generous donors. Fundraising truly is friendraising! Thank you!

15¢

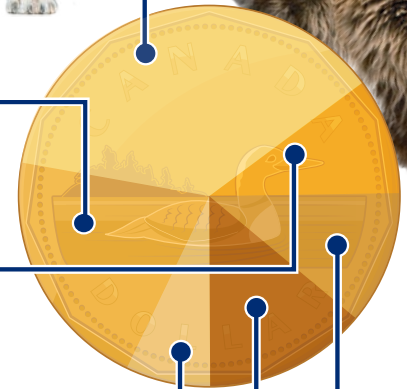


SUPPORTING THE ANIMALS

Provided a team to care for the animals. Nothing fancy, but essential.

13¢

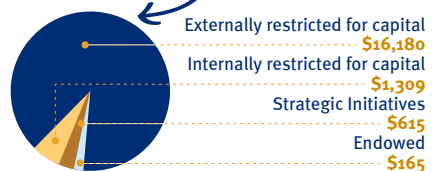
The total costs of Animal Protection includes expenses for shelter and treatment for animals seized, and the Animal Helpline. Together, all direct and indirect expenses total **\$10.79 million**.



REVENUES (IN \$000s)	Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023	Oct. 1, 2021 to Sept. 30, 2022
Donations & Fundraising	\$25,698	\$26,159
Legacy & Life Insurance ¹	\$18,659	\$27,367
Kenneling & Bylaw Enforcement	\$3,451	\$3,152
Sheltering, Medical, Clinical Services & Social Enterprise Services	\$6,499	\$7,247
Lotteries & Raffles	\$4,108	\$4,252
Government Grants & Subsidies	\$12,000	-
Other Grants	\$870	\$1,250
Investment Income	\$4,429	\$(3,666)
Capital Gains/Losses	\$0	\$49
Total	\$75,714	\$65,810

EXPENDITURES (IN \$000s)	Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023	Oct. 1, 2021 to Sept. 30, 2022
Sheltering, Kenneling, Bylaw Enforcement & Social Enterprise	\$20,069	\$16,655
Veterinary Care & Spay/Neuter	\$4,920	\$3,382
Animal Protection ²	\$5,151	\$4,577
Humane Education	\$1,181	\$1,187
Advocacy & Volunteer Development	\$1,962	\$1,770
Hospitals & Clinics	\$4,538	\$4,702
Animal Health & Welfare	\$954	\$869
Administration & Program Support	\$7,020	\$5,551
Revenue Development	\$8,283	\$7,889
Total	\$54,078	\$46,582

TOTALS (IN \$000s)	Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023	Oct. 1, 2021 to Sept. 30, 2022
Operating Surplus Before the Undernoted	\$21,636	\$19,228
Amortization	\$2,649	\$2,456
Bank Charges & Interest	\$718	\$751
Net Operating Surplus	\$18,269	\$16,021



¹ A significant portion of Legacy gifts are designated. Designated gifts are not recognized as revenue in our financial statements until the terms of the designation are met, which may be in future years.

² Direct expenses related to the BC SPCA's Animal Protection work for companion and farm animals is presented here. Please see above for total costs of Animal Protection.

Cents per dollar includes only the above expenditures and does not include amortization.

The BC SPCA is proud to be accredited by Imagine Canada. This accreditation means we've demonstrated excellence in financial accountability and transparency, board governance, fundraising, staff management and volunteer management.





YOUNG & WILD & *Free From Harm*

Spring babies are here! As the next generation of wild animals enters the world, learn how you can keep them safe, and stay out of their way

Spring is a vibrant, exciting time for us all, but it also signals a baby boom for animals – and thus, the start of the busiest season for the BC SPCA's Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre (Wild ARC). Many species are starting their nesting or rearing seasons, including squirrels, river otters, beavers, skunks, birds, bats, seals, raccoons and coyotes – to name just a few.

Learning to minimize your impact and coexist with animals during their breeding seasons can make a huge difference. Rearing young requires a lot of energy. Wild parents have much to contend with in ensuring their babies are safe – finding enough food, avoiding predators and, of course,

navigating the obstacles us humans put in their way! On that front, here are a few DOs and DON'Ts:

► **DO** keep your companion animals leashed and indoors. Many wild babies sustain injuries after they've been caught by a cat or dog and need to be brought to a rehabilitation centre for treatment. By keeping dogs leashed and keeping cats indoors or providing leashed and supervised outdoor access (or a catio), you can prevent them from stumbling upon a den or nest.

► **DON'T** bring a wild animal to a rehabilitation centre without confirming they actually need help. Many animals are brought in

unnecessarily because they were assumed to be orphaned while their parents were out searching for food. Separating babies from their parents when they are not truly orphaned causes additional stress and impacts their chances of survival. It's always best to keep babies with their wild parents.

► **DO** learn about the wildlife in your neighbourhood. Many animals exhibit different behaviour throughout their breeding season. For example, you may see fledgling birds on the ground while they are learning to fly – this stage may look awkward, but human intervention is not needed. You may also notice more daytime coyote sightings as



Across the province, spring babies of all different species are taking their first tentative steps, flaps and strokes into this world. While they are, no doubt, vulnerable – and our instinct may be to lend a hand – it's important that we humans know precisely when is the right time to offer assistance, and exactly how to do so.

juveniles begin to disperse and seek their own territory. Learn about the species in your area and how to tell if a baby animal needs help by using resources on our website at sPCA.bc.ca/found-baby-animal. If you are still uncertain, call your local wildlife rehabilitator or the BC SPCA Animal Helpline at 1.855.622.7722 for advice.

► **DO** transport animals to rehabilitation facilities when they need help. There is no ambulance for wildlife, and you are their best chance of getting the care they need in time. Always make sure to properly contain a wild animal before transporting them in your car. Learn exactly “How to rescue a wild animal” at sPCA.bc.ca/rescue-wild-animal.

► **DON'T** attempt to feed wild babies, or any wild animals, that you encounter. When in trouble, they require professional care. Trying to feed them on your own can make their condition worse if the food is inappropriate for the species or age. To prevent drowning, hypothermia or other complications, only provide water if a professional rehabilitator has indicated that it is the right thing to do. In general, never feed wild animals, either intentionally or unintentionally (i.e. by leaving food in the open), as it can lead to poor welfare, death and is a significant cause of human-wildlife conflict.

► **DO** an inspection of your yard as you prepare for more time outdoors.

Check for bird nests before trimming trees and walk around your property to look for rabbit nesting spots before mowing your lawn to minimize disturbance. If you plan on clearing brush piles or any windfall that has accumulated over winter, take extra care not to injure animals like songbirds and small mammals who may use these spaces for shelter.

All told, spring is a wonderful time to enjoy the gorgeous, fascinating natural world around us. By minimizing our impact on wild animals, learning to coexist and helping them when they need it most, we can contribute to a successful breeding season this year. ■

HAPPY *Tails*



Pit bull terrier
Maya takes a nap
with her nine puppies.

HAWK UNDER THE COLLAR II

A sharp-shinned hawk was chasing a smaller bird when she slammed into a window with devastating force. Thankfully, the homeowner who witnessed the strike was able to safely contain the injured bird and bring her to BC SPCA's Wild ARC facility.

"Wild ARC receives many birds who hit windows and this hawk had all the classic symptoms," says Samantha Webb, Wild ARC's manager of animal care services. "Swollen eyes, bruised inner ears and blood in her mouth."

After staff determined that her right clavicle was fractured, the right wing was wrapped to her body to immobilize the injured area and she was given medication, food and water. X-rays showed that the clavicle fracture was well-aligned and there were no other breaks; she would heal quickly if

the wrap stayed on. Unfortunately, that was easier said than done!

Our feisty little patient removed her wrap each night she was in care, despite every technique the rehabilitators tried. To their pleasant surprise, a callous still formed over the break and she was brought to an outdoor enclosure to assess her flight. Wobbly at first, the hawk was soon soaring from perch to perch.

After a week's stay in that outdoor enclosure, and 19 days after intake, she was released back to the wild.

PREGNANT PAWS II

Maya, a pregnant four-year-old pit bull terrier, was seized by BC SPCA animal protection officers from a property after she was found outdoors, tethered to tires, with no visible clean water or food, and surrounded by feces and garbage.

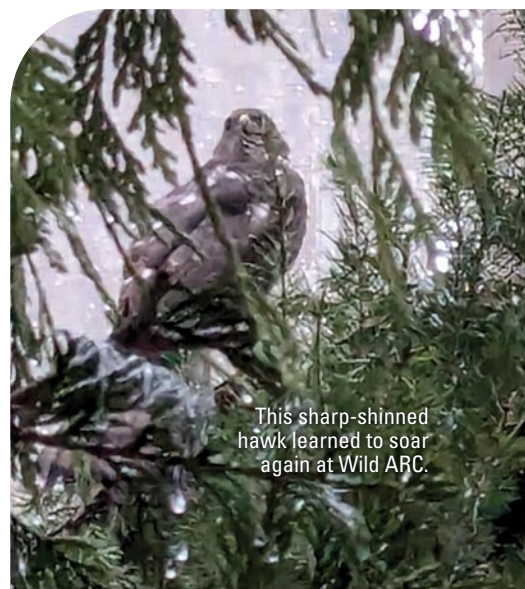
Her only shelter, a doghouse, had no bedding to shield her from the cold.

She was immediately brought to a veterinary clinic. A staffer named Mandi was working when Maya came in. When the BC SPCA couldn't find a foster for Maya, Mandi volunteered to bring Maya home to have her puppies. "We thought she was only going to have five or six," says Mandi. "She ended up giving birth to nine."

After her puppies were weaned and in their forever homes, it was Maya's turn. She was adopted by a guardian, but ultimately it wasn't a match. Luckily, an old friend was willing to take her in. "I swore I wasn't going to get another dog," Mandi reflects, "but when Maya came back to me, I just couldn't let her go."

Maya's two new siblings – Heidi, a retriever mix, and Ava, a pit bull terrier mix, both BC SPCA alumni – have been helping her feel right at home. "Maya bonded with Ava immediately because she will play and wrestle with her," says Mandi.

"Whatever Maya went through in her past isn't keeping her from being the sweetest dog," the proud guardian concludes. "We adore her."



This sharp-shinned hawk learned to soar again at Wild ARC.

THREE-LEGGED GRACE

|| A Good Samaritan found Peggy, a young stray, limping horribly and brought her to a cat rescue – who then surrendered her to the SPCA's Kamloops animal centre due to the severity of her injury.

“The veterinarian determined that the injury to Peggy’s front leg was an old fracture and it would be impossible to save it,” says Daria Evans, manager of the Kamloops facility. Peggy quickly recovered from her amputation surgery. She was spayed and made available for adoption, and was soon cuddling on the couch of her forever home.

“I have two cats, but I knew we had room in our home for one more,” says Candace, Peggy’s new mom, who had read about the kitty’s case in the news.

Peggy immediately fell in love with her brother, Mr. Heebee Geebees. “He looks just like her,” says Candace. Meanwhile, her new sister Pippa is also a tripod – and has been happy to show Peggy the ins and outs of running and jumping with three legs.

“Peggy has just been the best addition to our family,” says Candace. “She is the most loving cat, with the loudest purr.” ■



Tumble the goat with her boy Bramble (a.k.a. Carmi).

TUMBLE & BRAMBLE

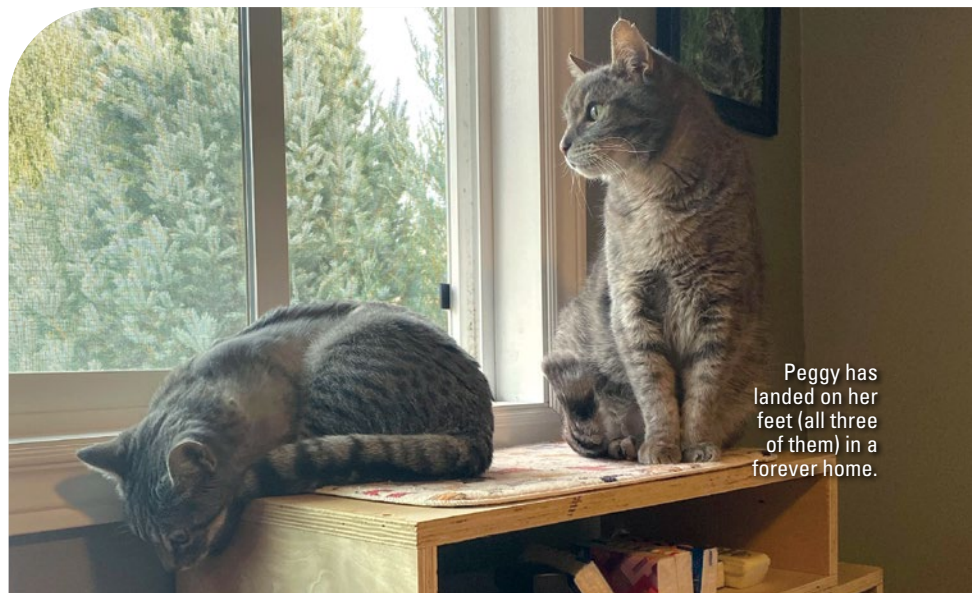
|| Tumble is one of 13 goats and other animals seized from a property on Vancouver Island. She was pregnant, emaciated and very sore when she came to the SPCA’s farm animal recovery and adoption facility in Nanaimo. While undergoing care, she was diagnosed with myotonia congenita – a condition that causes muscles to contract when stimulated. The contraction can be so severe that the animal collapses, which is why goats with this disease are often mistakenly referred to as “fainting goats.”

While at the BC SPCA, Tumble gave birth to Bramble. Then, in February, both mother and son were adopted. “Tumble is an absolute sweetheart and calls out each morning when I open the door to the barn,” says new guardian Jasmine. “She adores being brushed and loves head scratches and massages.”

Tumble gets along beautifully

with the other goats in Jasmine’s care. Meanwhile, Bramble (now named Carmi) is very much a mama’s boy – but he’s also slowly becoming his own goat, having fun exploring his new home away from mom’s side.

“Tumble had a recent check-up with our veterinarian, who gave her a clean bill of health,” Jasmine reports. “They also commented on how sweet a goat she was.” Jasmine couldn’t agree more.



Peggy has landed on her feet (all three of them) in a forever home.

ASK THE SPCA

We answer your questions about companion, farm and wild animal behaviour

I’m thinking of getting my children a dog. Do you have any advice? Any pitfalls to avoid?


If you are new to pet guardianship, you may want to consider fostering (spca.bc.ca/foster) or borrowing a friend’s or relative’s dog before committing long-term. The advantage here is that you won’t be promising your kids they are getting a dog before knowing if it’s the right decision.

PUPPY OR OLDER DOG? Note that puppies require a lot more time and attention than older canines. They chew everything – including shoes and your kids’ toys – while also scarfing down any and all unattended food. Keep in mind that though children say they will pick up the dog poop, take them for walks, etc., the reality is that primary care always falls to the adults. Be sure you have the energy, time and commitment required. Furthermore, reflect on your lifestyle,

and how a pet will impact things like vacations, attending kids’ sports and arts activities, and how active your family is before getting the children’s hopes up.

WHAT BREED? The breed you choose shouldn’t be the deciding factor, though some tend to be gentler and more accommodating with kids than others. You can start by searching for “friendly” breeds on the internet, but most important is the temperament and prior socialization of the individual dog, regardless of breed.

KNOWING THE DOG’S SOCIAL HISTORY and consulting an expert, such as an AnimalKind-accredited trainer (AnimalKind.ca), will allow you to identify behaviour challenges and underlying temperament. A trainer can also provide humane training classes and help build a strong bond between you and your new pup. Training is also a fun way to involve kids, but be sure that commands are delivered consistently by



“ Teach kids early on that hugging and squeezing may be tolerated by some dogs, but hugging generally makes dogs uncomfortable.



all family members so that your new dog knows their boundaries — and your kids know the dog's.

LASTLY, MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS ON BOARD with getting a pet and carefully consider the age and maturity of your children. Will they understand that your dog needs quiet time and “safe,” quiet spaces to retreat to without kids chasing after them, pulling tails or otherwise stressing them out? Monitor interactions closely. Teach kids early on that hugging and squeezing may be tolerated by some dogs, but hugging generally makes dogs uncomfortable. In fact, most bites occur when playing with the family dog or another familiar

dog. Visit [AnimalKind.ca](https://www.animalkind.ca) for more information.

I have a new cat who keeps waking me up at night. What can I do?

Although known to be nocturnal, cats can modify their sleep cycles to adjust to our patterns. First, check for any health issues that may be keeping them up at night with a quick trip to the vet.

After medical concerns have been ruled out, consider that your cat could be waking you up because they want to play, eat or simply enjoy your company. Many cats are left alone during the day

and, without much to do, sleep a lot. When you arrive home at night, their day is only just getting started!

To ready them for bedtime, schedule a few interactive play sessions during the evening. Games of keep-away and fetch are especially rewarding because they trigger natural predatory instincts. Toys that wiggle or dangle will allow them to stalk, chase, pounce and bite, just as if they were hunting down a mouse. Play until your cat seems tired.

Then, just before bedtime, feed them a main meal. Felines tend to sleep after a big meal. You can also use a timed feeder to dispense one or two small meals during the night. Be sure



to adjust the portions so that they are eating the same amount of food in a day, not more.

For all those hours they are alone during the day, make sure your kitty has things to keep them occupied, such as toys to play with, hidden treats to uncover, paper bags and cardboard boxes to explore, and window perches to watch birds outside. The more active your cats are during the day, the more likely that they will sleep at night.

Lastly, stay strong! If your cat wakes you at night, resist the urge to get up and feed or play with them. Doing so only rewards the nocturnal behaviour. Engaging with them at all, even to shush them, is reinforcement; to your cat, negative attention may be better than no attention at all.

I heard there was an increase in rats after the recent ban on rodenticides. Is this true?

Without reliable data that assesses

the abundance of rat populations, there is no way to know if the populations are growing or not. However, recent videos showing large groups of rats in Vancouver have been circulating on social media with an important component often visible – food!

Ample access to food will attract and keep rats in an area and will allow them to have multiple litters throughout the year. Things like birdseed, compost and unsecured garbage bins will turn your home into a hotspot. Before the ban, rodenticides were the default strategy to manage rodent populations, yet they did not address the root causes of infestations, and furthermore posed a serious threat to other animals and the environment.

More effective prevention and exclusion strategies that do actually deal with root causes include removing attractants like food, water and habitat; sealing and repairing all entry points to your home and doing regular inspections for repairs; altering landscaping to

“ The more active your cats are during the day, the more likely that they will sleep at night. ”

ensure there is no dense vegetation around the perimeter of buildings; and never feeding wild animals. Sometimes, lethal control does become necessary to protect our health and safety, but there are more effective and humane methods than rodenticides to manage rodents when this is the case.

Looking to hire a wildlife and rodent control service? Find an AnimalKind-accredited company that uses prevention and exclusion techniques that are humane, effective and safe for the environment and other animals at animalkind.ca/find-services. ■

Managing your pet's environmental pawprint



The Animal Welfare Program (AWP) at UBC has long been investigating links between animal welfare, human well-being and environmental health – termed “One Welfare.” However, many of these connections only address animal and human issues. The environmental aspect remains, all too often, unexplored.

There are numerous ways to conceptualize “environmental health” when analyzing the welfare concerns of companion animals (my particular interest within the AWP program). Perhaps it is simplest to start with the most direct understanding of this facet: how pet ownership affects and is affected by our changing climate.

Recently, my students and I delved into this issue, attempting to identify actions guardians can take to reduce their pets’ environmental impact and understand broader considerations when pondering the connections between companion animal welfare and climate change.

Some environmentally conscious behaviours are straightforward – we can reduce our purchase of new non-recyclable plastic toys, instead opting for homemade enrichment items (think of how much your cat loves that cardboard box!).

We can consider feeding our pets foods that have a smaller footprint – perhaps insect or plant protein instead of beef.

However, in my opinion, these are merely surface-level strategies. Our decision on what kind of companion animal to welcome into our home determines how environmentally conscious our pet-keeping behaviours will be – given that most of us are driven to ensure the best possible life for our animals at all costs. For instance, if I were to get a husky while living in downtown Vancouver, I would require:

- ▶ *a car to leave the city for exercise opportunities, especially on hot summer days;*
- ▶ *ample food due to my dog's larger size and fast metabolism; and*
- ▶ *air conditioning to prevent overheating in my glass-walled apartment.*

Yet, all of these things that must be done to ensure the health and comfort of my husky will also substantially harm the environment.

So what is the recommendation? We might opt for animals already well-suited for our climate (anticipating that temperatures may rise within the animal’s lifespan). We may choose dogs with slower metabolisms and less demanding exercise needs,

smaller-sized dogs, or even cats simply due to lower food consumption. Another option to consider: local shelters are full of wonderful companion rats that are happy to eat human leftovers and will appreciate your affection more than plastic toys!

The exploration of how environmental health is connected to human well-being and animal welfare certainly does not end here. In some ways, this is the most straightforward connection, but there are likely many more we have yet to discover. Nonetheless, one thing remains certain: by continuing to explore these complex connections, we will be far more effective in improving the lives of all creatures on this planet. ■



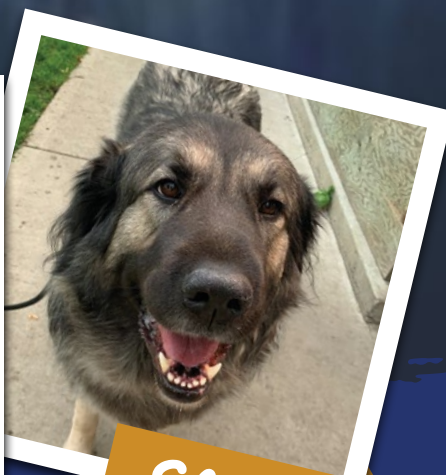
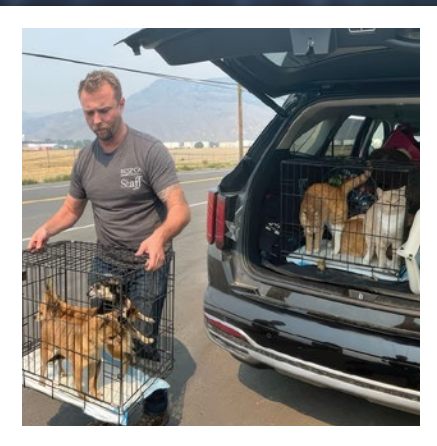
Dr. Alexandra Protopopova is the BC SPCA Chair in Companion Animal Welfare in the UBC Animal Welfare Program. The program, initiated in 1997 by the BC SPCA and other community partners, works to improve the welfare of animals through “research, education and public outreach.”

YOUR LOVE CAN SAVE ANIMALS DURING AN EMERGENCY

Last year hundreds of pets like Hazel and Sasha were cared for by the BC SPCA during wildfire emergencies. Your caring gift ensures that when disasters such as fires or floods strike, help is there for evacuated animals and their loving guardians.

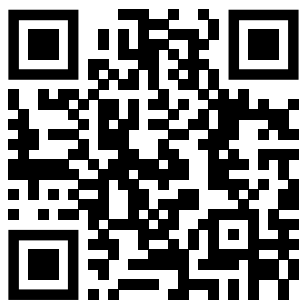


HAZEL



SASHA

Will you open your heart to provide shelter, care and supplies during the next emergency?



MAKE YOUR CARING GIFT

Scan the QR code or visit spca.bc.ca/emergencies