

**PLUS: THE BCSPCA 2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

# AnimalSense

spca.bc.ca Spring/Summer 2025 \$2.95

## ANIMALS & PEOPLE THRIVING TOGETHER

BC SPCA's new  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
charts a bold course  
for animal welfare

*Inside:*  
**BEST  
BEHAVIOUR**

*Building a home  
for every heart*



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Theodore

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# BCSPCA

is a not-for-profit reliant on support from animal lovers like you.

To explore ways to show your care, visit [spca.bc.ca](https://spca.bc.ca).

THANK YOU!



# AnimalSense

BC SPCA SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

Spring/Summer 2025

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# BCSPCA

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



### *Dear Friends,*

**IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR**, the BC SPCA launched its new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. In this issue of *AnimalSense*, we delve into our bold future for animal welfare.

As in years past, this edition of *AnimalSense* also includes the BC SPCA's Annual Report, providing a comprehensive overview of the Society's essential work over the last year.

Many people think the animals on the BC SPCA's adoption page are the only ones in our care. They are, in fact, the "tip of the iceberg." We take a deep dive into why it may take months for some animals to be available for adoption.

We also share the important story of a fearful dog named Phoenix. Learn how this dog and others like him have shaped the vision for our Vancouver Island Animal Behaviour Centre, currently under construction in Duncan.

Don't forget our feel-good Happy Tails column, featuring the heartwarming story of bovine besties, and a kitten who survived a dog attack.

2024 was a year of exciting change. The community services model first piloted in Vernon has been a success and is now being rolled out in other areas, fostering greater community connection while maintaining our essential services. I am very proud of what we have accomplished together. Your loving support and dedication to helping animals makes all this possible.

Craig Daniell  
Chief Executive Officer  
BC SPCA

## SUPPORTING victims of abuse – and their pets

**FOR MANY PEOPLE** experiencing interpersonal violence, the safety of their pets is a major factor in deciding whether to leave. Tragically, in some cases, abusers have already harmed or killed beloved animals before their guardians could seek help.

In response, the BC SPCA launched the **Safekeepers** pilot program in late 2023 in the Lower Mainland. This confidential emergency boarding service provides a safe and loving temporary home for pets while their guardians take steps toward their own safety. By reaching out to the BC SPCA, people enduring interpersonal violence can access a network of specially trained volunteer fosters ready to care for their animals with compassion and respect.



Safekeepers Program

Thanks to the success of the pilot and the 35 families already assisted, **Safekeepers is now expanding to the Okanagan.** Recruitment is currently underway for volunteers in the Vernon area, with the goal of having 10 trained fosters in place by May to begin accepting new clients.

If you or someone you know could benefit from the **Safekeepers** program, please contact [safekeepers@spca.bc.ca](mailto:safekeepers@spca.bc.ca) or call the BC SPCA Animal Helpline at **1.855.622.7722**.

To learn more or to sign up as a volunteer, visit [spca.bc.ca/safekeepers](https://spca.bc.ca/safekeepers). ■

## STAY CONNECTED



**HELP US CREATE A BETTER** world for animals – get the latest BC SPCA news delivered right to your inbox 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](https://spca.bc.ca/get-updates). You can also visit [spca.bc.ca/newsletters](https://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, 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](https://spca.bc.ca/membership) for more information or to apply for/renew your membership. ■



# JACKPOT OF generosity

**LAST SUMMER**, caring folks all across the province joined in the fun of the BC SPCA Lottery, making it the charity's biggest 50/50 pot yet – nearly \$1.5 million! Half went to the animals, and half to one lucky animal lover. Langley local Pam couldn't believe her ears when she received the call. She was the winner! As the reality sank in, she started shedding tears of joy.

"Winning this 50/50 was the most unexpected, amazing thing that has ever happened to us," says Pam. "We were able to pay off our mortgage and help our four kids with their education."

As a guardian to three dogs, Pam has a strong connection to animal welfare. "When I bought my ticket, it was only to help one of my favourite charities...

It makes my heart so happy knowing so many animals will be receiving the help and love they desperately need."

Sign up for emails to be notified when the lottery returns at [lottery.sPCA.bc.ca](https://lottery.sPCA.bc.ca). ■



50/50 winner Pam and her family.

“We were able to pay off our mortgage and help our four kids with their education.”



mister Blake

## A SONG in his heart

**BEYOND HIS PASSION FOR MUSIC**, Vancouver singer mister Blake has committed his life to helping people and animals “both locally and globally” – part of the tagline for his namesake foundation that has supported myriad causes across several decades.

In his third year as top sponsor for the annual Offleashed Gala in Vancouver, the animals were fortunate that his tremendous support inspired many caring folks to give to our furry friends who need it most. In addition to his amazing generosity, he also capped off the 10th anniversary celebration with a live performance of “I Only Want to Be

With You.” This song helped Blake to launch a very successful music career that allowed him to travel the world and understand people and animals’ many needs.

Over the years, he invested much of his profits into his foundation – but ensured he had plenty left over to care for the nine Shelties to whom he’s been a loyal guardian.

The BC SPCA is profoundly grateful to mister Blake and his foundation for the many animals he has helped.

To learn more about Offleashed 2025 – taking place on Friday, November 14 – visit [offleashed.sPCA.bc.ca](https://offleashed.sPCA.bc.ca). ■

# A LEGACY *of Love*

**THE LATE GARY CARTER** led a full and fascinating life. He worked as a logger and fisherman before settling on Salt Spring Island as an environmentally conscious property developer.

Gary loved animals. He risked his life to save his dog from a sinking boat and in another instance, from a burning house. Regardless of the adventure, Gary always had a dog by his side. In his final years, Gary's two constant companions were his golden Labrador, Marley, and his Siamese cat, Ku.

Gary's legacy of kindness and compassion will nurture animals and help them overcome fear and trauma through the Vancouver

Island Animal Behaviour Centre (VIABC), under construction now and expected to open in 2026.

VIABC will meet the emotional and behavioural needs of under-socialized and fearful animals by housing them in a quiet and secluded environment, with specialized rehabilitative care. VIABC will also serve as the community intake centre for dogs from Salt Spring Island, the community that Gary cared for so deeply.

Thank you, Gary! Your love will build a home for every heart and give animals the care they need to find their forever home. To learn more about VIABC, visit [behaviourcentre.sPCA.bc.ca](http://behaviourcentre.sPCA.bc.ca). ■



Gary Carter



## Work in PROGRESS

**THE BC SPCA** Prince George Spay/Neuter Clinic has been working closely with Soft Paws Cat Rescue Society to manage a well-known cat colony called "Progress." For years, despite everyone's best efforts, the colony was overrun, as new kittens kept popping up.

One of the most effective and humane ways to manage feral cat populations is through a method called trap-neuter-return (TNR). TNR involves humanely trapping the cats, getting them spayed or neutered and vaccinated, then releasing them to their home territory. This approach helps stop the cycle of unchecked birth and improves the health of the cats

already living in the colony.

To support this, the Prince George clinic holds several "feral cat spay and neuter days" each year. Volunteers from Soft Paws help by trapping and transporting cats from colonies like Progress to the clinic, where they receive surgery, vaccines, microchips and any minor care they need.

In early 2024, the two groups were excited to trap and spay the final, elusive female cats in the colony – ones who had been populating the community with several litters per year. Although it can be common for new feline

members to join rural colonies, this has not yet been the case for Progress; it continues to be considered a "maintenance" colony, with all the primary members spayed or neutered, and no new kittens spotted since February 2024. ■



# A NEW VISION FOR *Animal Welfare*



Building on what's come before, the BC SPCA's latest Strategic Plan takes action to see animals and their humans thriving together

**M**ore than 125 years ago, a small group of clergy, journalists and businessmen concerned about the mistreatment of work horses successfully lobbied to establish laws protecting animals from abuse and neglect in B.C. This led to the creation of The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA).

The first animal cruelty charge brought by the BC SPCA in the 1890s resulted in a \$5 fine to a Victoria resident for “wanton cruelty to a wretched old horse” – an amount that reflected the times, both economically and socially, and offers a striking comparison to the much steeper consequences often seen today. In fact, a recent investigation resulted in one couple, with a history of animal cruelty charges, each owing \$10,000 in fines and receiving a 10-year ban on owning or breeding animals.

Those early advocacy efforts over a century ago led to the opening of the BC SPCA's very first

animal centre in Victoria in 1897; the introduction of animal welfare education for youth in 1932; Canada's first spay/neuter clinic in 1976, with subsequent BC SPCA clinics opening in 2005 and 2009; and the launch of the BC SPCA's Animal Helpline as a centralized way to field cruelty reports in 2013. Even from these few select examples, one thing is clear:

***The BC SPCA has always evolved to best meet the needs of animals and their guardians across the province.***

In late 2023, BC SPCA



“Those early advocacy efforts over a century ago led to the opening of the BC SPCA's first animal centre in Victoria in 1897.

leadership embarked on an 18-month journey to shape the long-term future of the organization and its next Strategic Plan. Top of mind during these discussions were ways to evolve the Society to better tackle the real causes of animal suffering in our communities.

“With animal shelters and wildlife rehabilitation facilities across North America consistently operating at or beyond capacity, the heartbreaking reality is that there is no end to the cycle of animal suffering unless we invest more heavily in addressing the bigger issues at play,” says Craig



Daniell, CEO of the BC SPCA. “When an animal comes into our care, or an animal protection officer investigates a case of cruelty, that one animal is relieved of its suffering but there are many more who still need help. By focusing on preventing the actual root causes of animal suffering, we can stop some of these cycles of distress before they start, ultimately helping more animals and reducing the burden on our animal centres.”

Building on past success in improving laws for animals, over the next 25 years, the BC SPCA plans to elevate its role as advocates and champions for animal welfare in British Columbia, while maintaining a safety net for the province’s most vulnerable animals. Fortunately, some of this work has already begun; the BC SPCA urged candidates to include specific commitments to welfare in their party platforms leading up to both the 2024 provincial election and the 2025 federal election.

According to Daniell, “There is growing recognition across the animal welfare sector that when people are suffering, their animals suffer too. In British Columbia right now, there are so many families facing challenges with the rising cost of living and other societal issues, which are having a direct impact on their animals. People are having to choose between feeding themselves or their pets. Loving families are struggling to find places to live with their animals after losing pet-friendly accommodation. In a lot of these situations, it can feel like the only option is to surrender

their animal.”

While much groundwork will be done in the early years of the new Strategic Plan to determine where the BC SPCA can have the most impact, these growing societal challenges and the interconnectedness between the health and welfare of animals and our own well-being forms the basis of this work. The end goal, wherever possible, is to stop suffering before it ever begins, and in many ways this could mean supporting the guardians caring for animals through education, resources and other means.

The BC SPCA’s 2025-2030 Strategic Plan was designed to set the foundation for and have the most impact in three key areas in support of this: addressing the root causes of suffering to create the conditions for animals and people



to thrive together; strengthening the safety net to prevent suffering and reduce the vulnerability of animals; and nurturing the long-term organizational health of the BC SPCA.

“ Over the next 25 years, the BC SPCA plans to elevate its role as advocates and champions for animal welfare in British Columbia.

## From 2025-2030, the BC SPCA will focus on:

- **Continuing** to provide care and protection to animals that are vulnerable, but also looking for opportunities to reduce this animal vulnerability through proactive community-based approaches.
- **Identifying** opportunities to address the root causes of animal suffering in our society by influencing systems change for companion, farmed and wild animals alike, and ensuring animal welfare concerns are always top of mind for decision-makers across the province.
- **Strengthening** relationships with the public and other partner organizations so we can all be stronger advocates and champions for animal welfare in British Columbia.
- **Amplifying** the BC SPCA's impact by working with partners and allies to make our communities stronger, and broadening our capacity to build a humane future.

**VISION:** *Animals and people thriving together.*

**MISSION:** *Protecting vulnerable animals and mobilizing communities so animals and people thrive together.*



As part of the strategic planning process, the BC SPCA has also evolved its vision and mission statements to better reflect this long-term goal of animals and people thriving together across the province.

“Addressing the root causes of animal suffering in British Columbia is a complex challenge that won’t be solved in the next five years, and likely not even in the next 25,” says Daniell. “But we know that by focusing on preventing animal distress before it happens, we can help a greater number of animals and work towards a world where animals and people thrive together.”

To learn more about the BC SPCA's new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, visit [spca.bc.ca/strategicplan](https://spca.bc.ca/strategicplan). ■



# A Look Back... VICTORIES FOR ANIMALS, 2019-2023

**W**hen the BC SPCA launched its 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, the Society had a clear vision of our goals to help animals over the next five years.

But in January 2020, life for animals and their guardians changed in ways that no one could have predicted with the onset of a pandemic that unleashed unprecedented health concerns in our communities, serious economic hardship for many British Columbians, and levels of social isolation that impacted every aspect of daily life and work.

“We had to pivot quickly on two fronts,” says BC SPCA CEO Craig Daniell. “First, we had to come up with creative ways to execute our Strategic Plan while implementing social distancing regulations that restricted access to our animal centres, veterinary facilities and offices. We also had to create new services to respond to the serious challenges the pandemic caused for animals and their guardians. Holding true to our five-year plan while adapting to changing circumstances allowed us to help the greatest number of animals and their families.”

**Here's a look back at the achievements of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan:**

## ANIMAL PROTECTION

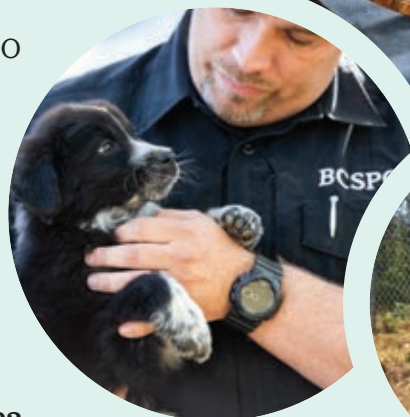
- **Improved response time** to complaints in every region of the province, by increasing the number of animal protection officers and reorganizing our management structure to better align with regional needs.
- **Increased resources** to address the growing number of appeals in protection cases. The addition of in-house legal

counsel elevated our ability to advocate for seized animals to stay in BC SPCA care and be adopted into loving homes; our success rate at BC Farm Industry Review Board appeals was more than 90 per cent.

- **Implemented an Alternative Measures program** to provide support for basic care and veterinary costs for guardians impacted by mental health issues or economic hardship, where it was in the best

interest of the animal to stay with their human.

- **Inclusion of BC SPCA's animal protection officers** on provincial Integrated Case Assessment Teams (ICATS), which ensured that pets are also considered in cases in which women and children are at high risk of violence. We have seen a number of preventative collaborations to protect animals and reduce abuse in this Strategic Plan.



### OUTREACH

- **Partnership with 10 supportive housing buildings** operated by BC Housing to develop policies and programs to prevent escalation of animal welfare challenges to the point animal protection intervention was required.
- **Development of a comprehensive pet food bank strategy** to expand the existing food banks operated by individual BC SPCA centres, and the creation of strategic partnerships with 180 organizations across the province to distribute pet food to animals in need, including Indigenous partners.
- **Creation of the Safekeepers** program to expand temporary emergency boarding for individuals and their pets fleeing interpersonal violence.

### ANIMAL CARE

- **Designed** new facilities using the Canadian Standards of Care in Animal Shelters.
- **Introduced Fear Free principles** to our animal centres and veterinary hospitals.
- **Applied Low Stress Handling** techniques at all our facilities.
- **Provided Emergency Response** services across the province and set up evacuation sites in Prince George and Kamloops.
- **organization's vision, mission and high-level structure, and development of renewed BC SPCA Values.**
- **Analysis of mental health** issues and supports in the organization and the implementation of a new Mental Health Action Plan that included a Peer Support Program pilot, education about mental health topics and support resources, providing more realistic job previews when hiring staff, enhancing our Employee Assistance Program, and providing regular de-escalation training.
- **Continued enhancements** to our Leadership Development Program, including the implementation of cultural awareness and bias, change management, optional 360 reviews, and piloting cultural safety training.
- **Building awareness and compliance** for occupational health and safety requirements, starting with the highest-risk areas.
- **Safer space signage** for BC SPCA locations and pronoun pins across the organization. Updated our internal training courses to include closed-captioning and address any accessibility issues.

### PEOPLE SERVICES

- **Led** one of the most comprehensive and consultative strategic planning exercises in BC SPCA history, including a refresh of the

### FINANCIAL SERVICES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- **Improved** budgeting process.
- **Development of a Capital**



**Reserve** to fund our future major capital projects.

- **Improved finance workflow** to respond quickly to natural disasters and other emergency response services.
- **Enhanced cybersecurity systems** and organization-wide cybersecurity training.
- **Increased response time** of IT support for BC SPCA centres and departments.
- **Improvements to IT support** and equipment to Community Animal Centres.

### HUMANE EDUCATION

- **Virtual programming infrastructure** that came out of the COVID-19 pandemic now allows us to deliver camps and teacher presentations virtually throughout the province.
- ***What Animals Want***, a book for youth, was created in partnership with Orca Books.
- **A school curriculum partnership** with digital education resource Live It Earth.



### SCIENCE & POLICY

- **Launched AnimalKind** accreditation for humane dog training companies in 2019.
- **Successfully** campaigned for a ban on mink farming in British Columbia and prohibitions against the most harmful rodenticides in B.C.
- **Secured** the first provincial political party election platform commitment to animal welfare in 2024. ■





BCSPCA

# 2024 | ANNUAL REPORT

***Dear Friends:*** We are pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report of The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA). Thanks to your ongoing support, the BC SPCA was able to assist more than 167,000 animals during the past year. During this period, we also developed a new Strategic Plan for 2025 to 2030 – a plan that is rooted in ensuring animals and people can thrive together. With you as our allies, we will continue to help the most vulnerable animals, keep families together and address the root causes of animal suffering.

CRAIG DANIELL  
Chief Executive Officer  
BC SPCA

MARK MONTEMURRO  
Chair  
BC SPCA Board of Directors

2023

135,764

2024

167,890

# REACHING THE *Most Vulnerable*

**T**hroughout 2024, the BC SPCA provided life-saving protection, sheltering, urgently needed medical care and outreach support. Because of your kindness, the lives of 167,890 animals were touched. With your help, we provided direct care for 15,970 animals, found homes for 11,174 animals, reunited 1,192 lost pets with their guardians, provided veterinary services for 20,810 animals, and cared for 2,043 injured and orphaned wild animals. In addition to our brick-and-mortar facilities, the BC SPCA transitioned last year to an exciting new community-based service model in Vernon, Nelson and Cowichan to help animals and guardians in need.

## ► SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION JOURNEY

In 2024, our care teams across the province continued to see a rise in the intake of fearful and under-socialized animals and those needing significant behavioural support before finding their forever homes. “Animals with behavioural issues typically require more resources, stay longer in care and can present barriers for staff and volunteers in handling and caring for them,” says Tracy Westmoreland, senior director for sheltering. To ensure that these animals

received dedicated help for their adoption journey, the BC SPCA team responded with increased safety training to help with the handling of the animals and the recruitment and training of more experienced foster volunteers to provide behavioural support.

The BC SPCA also began construction on a centre in Duncan that will offer specialized behavioural care for dogs and cats. In 2024, these efforts led to a reduction of days in care for animals before going to their forever homes.

## ► THE VULNERABILITY SPECTRUM

In 2024, BC SPCA care and protection experts created an innovative system to ensure that community animals at greatest risk and danger are prioritized for intake at our centres. “As with any animal welfare organization, the BC SPCA does not have unlimited capacity to take in animals,” says Adrienne McBride, senior director for animal flow. “Our new Vulnerability Spectrum guides our staff in making consistent and informed decisions

about which animals are in greatest need of our space, and which can be helped through other BC SPCA services.”

McBride notes that this triage-style system will allow the BC SPCA to respond quickly to the most vulnerable animals, streamline wait time, and



BC SPCA staff helping animals.



“As with any animal welfare organization, the BC SPCA does not have unlimited capacity to take in animals.”

provide the public with clear information on how each animal can be helped most efficiently, according to their needs. “The system will also operate regionally so that animals at greatest risk can be transported to another BC SPCA facility in the area for intake if there is no space in their own community.”

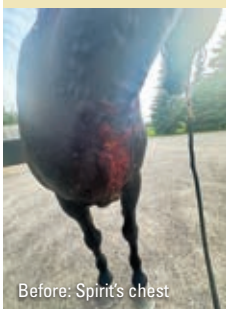
#### ► PROTECT

**Each year**, BC SPCA protection officers save thousands of animals in dangerous and neglectful situations – from hoarding and irresponsible breeders to cases of violent abuse. With your support, BC SPCA officers conducted 7,651 investigations and assisted 76,384 animals last year. “One of the alarming trends we are seeing is the number of animals exposed to harmful drugs and other noxious substances,” says Shawn Eccles, senior director of animal protection services. “These complaints have doubled in the past five years.”

Eccles notes that protection officers are also seeing more complaints due to lack of access to veterinary care. “In 2024, we were able to help more than 200 animals through our diversion program, which offers assistance to guardians in need so that pets and families can stay



After: Doting mom Spirit with her newborn foal Journey.



Before: Spirit's chest



Before: Spirit's face

### ***A Resilient Spirit***

**When Spirit** was found on the side of a remote logging road in Fort St. John, the mare was suffering from multiple lesions on her body and was covered in hives and welts. She was also noticeably pregnant. Notified by the conservation officer who found her, BC SPCA protection officers responded quickly. She was examined by a veterinarian and was prescribed topical medication and oral antibiotics.

“She was placed in an amazing foster home, where she received love, attention, good nutrition, and the calm and rest she needed to recover,” says Christy King, interim program manager for farm and equine animal care services. Spirit’s skin cleared up and the horse, who seemed to have given up on life, was once again alert, happy and healthy.

On July 28, she gave birth to a beautiful foal named Journey, and she has since been adopted by the caring foster mom who helped give her a second chance.

**7,651**  
ANIMAL CRUELTY  
INVESTIGATIONS

**76,384**  
ANIMALS ASSISTED BY BC  
SPCA PROTECTION OFFICERS

**1,637**  
ANIMALS REMOVED FROM  
DANGEROUS OR NEGLECTFUL  
SITUATIONS

**79,552**  
CALLS TO THE BC SPCA  
PROVINCIAL HELPLINE

**15,970**  
HOMELESS ANIMALS  
PROVIDED WITH  
EMERGENCY CARE AND  
SHELTER

**20,810**  
ANIMALS TREATED  
THROUGH BC SPCA  
VETERINARY SERVICES

**11,174**  
ANIMALS ADOPTED INTO  
NEW LOVING HOMES

**1,912**  
LOST ANIMALS REUNITED  
WITH GUARDIANS

**2,043**  
INJURED AND ORPHANED  
WILDLIFE REHABILITATED

**5,109**  
ANIMALS TRANSPORTED  
THROUGH THE BC SPCA  
DRIVE FOR LIVES PROGRAM

**13,620**  
SPAY/NEUTER SURGERIES  
FOR HOMELESS AND  
COMMUNITY ANIMALS

**234,768**  
REGISTRANTS IN THE BC PET  
REGISTRY TO REUNITE LOST  
ANIMALS WITH GUARDIANS

**41**  
DOG TRAINERS AND  
2 PEST CONTROL  
COMPANIES ACCREDITED  
THROUGH THE BC SPCA  
ANIMALKIND PROGRAM

# KEEPING PETS AND FAMILIES *Together*

**M**any B.C. families faced increased economic pressure in 2024, with the rise in food insecurity impacting both people and animals. To reduce the number of people forced to give up their pets due to lack of resources, the BC SPCA's outreach team expanded its Pet Food Bank program across the province last year, increasing its strategic partnerships with social

service organizations. With the help of 180 partners and 34 BC SPCA food bank locations, the Pet Food Bank program was able to distribute 97,466 kilograms of dry pet food and litter, as well as 73,826 cans of wet food. With your support, we delivered 654,727 meals and assisted 40,698 animals with a week's worth of food, enabling pets and families to stay together.

## *Keeping Keekee Safe*

In the heart of the holiday season, the BC SPCA's Safekeepers program became a lifeline for a woman in the Lower Mainland fleeing interpersonal violence. She was desperate to find

a reprieve for herself and her beloved cat, Keekee.

Thanks to the compassion and dedication of a Safekeepers volunteer, Keekee found a warm, loving home for 31 days during that crucial time. Our volunteer ensured the kitty had everything she needed – a safe place to stay, plenty of food, and all the love and attention a cat could ask for. As the calendar turned to January 2025, the woman was able to reclaim Keekee and start the year with a renewed sense of hope. She had found a new place to call home, and now, with her furry best friend by her side, she could move forward with strength.



Keekee



Puppy time

## ■ A SAFE HAVEN FROM VIOLENCE

### The BC SPCA's outreach

team continued to provide support for individuals fleeing domestic violence in 2024. "Our Safekeepers program offers long-term foster care for pets so that their guardians can seek help and safety for themselves, knowing that their animals are being well cared for until they are able to be reunited," says Lidia Kemeny, BC SPCA's senior manager, outreach programs. "By providing a safe, temporary home for their pets, we are able to keep people and animals together and remove a barrier that sometimes prevents individuals from leaving a dangerous situation."

Thanks to your support, Safekeepers assisted 35 families by fostering 46 animals for a total of 1,299 nights last year.



### *So Happy Together*

**Prudence** was just three months old when she came into Jo's life. Living on a limited income, Jo depends on the BC SPCA's Pet Food Bank program to help provide her precious cat with the care she needs. The money that Jo saves on pet food is put toward more wet food and toys for Prudence, who requires a whole lot of stimulation to stay happy. Another benefit of participating in the program, she says, is the opportunity to connect with neighbours, and chat about their pets. For Jo, these gatherings are a highlight, bringing a sense of community and warmth in a difficult world.



Prudence

“ Kind and empathetic kids are learning how to create a bright and safe future for animals.

#### ► SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORT

**Homelessness** and a lack of affordable housing in B.C. continued to impact both people and animals in 2024. In response, the BC SPCA's outreach team partnered on a project with BC Housing to support guardians living in 10 selected shelters and social housing spaces to ensure residents and their animals could stay together in a safe and supportive environment.

The BC SPCA identified key concerns for guardians in the buildings and followed up with resources tailored to meet their needs. A key action step was the creation of pet-friendly policies for the facilities that set out guidelines for basic care, managing fearful, reactive and under-socialized animals, veterinary support, dealing with too many pets, and roaming cats.

Levi Hole, a resident coordinator in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, says the BC SPCA program not only improved the lives of the animals in BC Housing facilities, but also

empowered residents to build healthier relationships, laying the foundation for a brighter future – for residents and animals alike.

#### ► EDUCATION

**Kind and empathetic** kids are learning how to create a bright and safe future for animals. In 2024, the BC SPCA Humane Education team connected with 8,488 students in B.C. schools; welcomed 1,110 kids and teens to workshops and camps onsite at our Community Animal Centres; supported 5,500 BC SPCA Kids Club members; provided resources for more than 3,000 educators; and engaged 15,000 students to date with its *Dogs* online learning program in partnership with Live It Earth. ■



**654,727**

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

**6,300**

NIGHTS OF FREE EMERGENCY PET  
BOARDING FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE  
AND NATURAL DISASTERS

# ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES OF *Suffering*

**W**hile the BC SPCA will always be a safety net for our province's most vulnerable animals, advocating for change to prevent future suffering is a key focus of the Society's strategic efforts. Some of these changes happen quickly, others require ongoing advocacy, but it is vital that we continue to speak out for animals at risk.

In 2024, the BC SPCA continued to campaign on a number of key issues, including:

- **Pet Friendly Housing** Mobilized 6,300 B.C. supporters to petition for a proposed Canadian Renters' Bill of Rights that would void any "no pet" clauses in tenancy agreements. The petition garnered 19,500 signatures nationally.
- **Live Horse Export** Gathered more than 4,000 letters in support of Bill C-355 to prohibit the export by air of horses for slaughter. When the Bill stalled after the first reading in Senate, the Society again mobilized more than 9,300 of our supporters to contact the Senate.
- **Prioritizing Animals in Election Platforms** Ahead of the 2024 provincial election,

the BC SPCA reached out to British Columbia's four main political parties, urging them to integrate key animal welfare policies into their platforms. As a result, the NDP accepted the BC SPCA's recommendation regarding pet-friendly housing as part of its platform.

BC SPCA advocacy and expertise were also offered on topics ranging from a ban on glue traps (an inhumane method of pest control), a recovery strategy for spotted owl habitat, a humane management plan for Canada geese, farmed animal welfare in B.C., transparent and standardized egg labelling, deer management, and the replacement of live animals used in regulatory testing.

## ■ A VOICE FOR FARMED ANIMALS

**Bettering** the lives of farmed animals is a key priority for the BC SPCA. In 2024, the National Farm Animal Care Council, which creates the Codes of Practice that guide the care and welfare of farmed animals, sought feedback on four Codes that were under review – Poultry,

Sheep, Equine and Beef.

"The BC SPCA submitted our top three concerns for these farmed animals and encouraged our supporters to do the same," says Melissa Speirs, BC SPCA manager of farm animal welfare. "As a result of these actions, many of the animal welfare issues identified by BC SPCA experts have been selected as an area of focus by the Code Development Committees."

She notes that these improvements, if adopted, will impact more than 114 million turkeys and chickens, more than one million sheep, nearly one million beef cattle and 184,000 horses annually. ■

## 216,127

VISITS TO OUR TAKE ACTION  
ADVOCACY WEBPAGE AND 205,000  
SUBSCRIBERS TO OUR TAKE  
ACTION ALERTS.

## 11

MAJOR ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS  
LAUNCHED AND 25 POLICY  
SUBMISSIONS CREATED TO  
IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ANIMALS

## 336,157

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS  
HELPING US SPREAD THE WORD

## 8.7 Million

WEBSITE VISITS FOR NEWS AND  
EDUCATION ON ANIMAL ISSUES





# BUILDING *Our Future*

**T**o ensure we are here to protect animals, now and in the future, the BC SPCA prioritizes financial strength; technical innovation; transparent and efficient governance; and staff and volunteer programs that promote growth and resilience. In 2024, the BC SPCA took action to improve and streamline our budgeting processes; strengthen financial accountability; grow our IT infrastructure to address cybersecurity issues; expand leadership training opportunities for staff; and strengthen programs relating to mental health and equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation. The BC SPCA also finalized our new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, including a refresh of the organization's vision, mission and high-level structure.

Since 2013, the Society has been among the elite group of Canadian organizations accredited by Imagine Canada, the national umbrella for charities and non-profits. Imagine Canada accreditation highlights competence in five fundamental areas: financial accountability and transparency; board governance;

fundraising; staff management; and volunteer involvement.

## FOSTERING HOPE

The BC SPCA's 3,743 volunteers are an invaluable part of our team, providing 222,332 hours of services to animals across the province in 2024.

"Volunteers take on so many urgently needed roles within our organization and enable us to do work that otherwise wouldn't be possible," says Lindsay Baker, senior manager, volunteer resources. "There is also a trend in the animal welfare sector towards a more community-based approach to service delivery which relies primarily on volunteers."

Baker explains that one of the key needs identified by the BC SPCA in 2024 was for more foster volunteers to help animals who need a safe and nurturing home environment on their adoption journey. And so, the volunteer resources team took steps to bolster this area by conducting a review of all foster program materials, collecting feedback from interested parties, analyzing best practices from across the globe, and making recommendations to help the BC SPCA improve the foster experience and expand the program for the future.

"We also connected with volunteer-run foster programs in Canada, the U.S. and Australia to identify best practices, and were able to successfully pilot these community-based models in Vernon, Nelson and Cowichan last year," says Baker. ■



Volunteers holding a puppy.

## Leadership TEAM

### BC SPCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

### EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- **Craig Daniell**  
*Chief Executive Officer*
- **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*

39

BC SPCA FACILITIES DEDICATED TO THE  
CARE AND PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

599

SKILLED AND CARING STAFF

3,743

DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS WHO HELP US  
EXPAND OUR SERVICES TO ANIMALS

222,332

VOLUNTEER HOURS PROVIDED



# YOUR GENEROSITY IN ACTION

FOR EVERY DOLLAR YOU GAVE IN 2024,  
HERE IS HOW YOU HELPED ANIMALS



36¢

## EMERGENCY SHELTER & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Provided a temporary home for **15,970** abandoned, injured and abused animals, helped injured and orphaned wildlife and assisted **45,196** animals in the community.



18¢

## CHECK-UPS & MEDICAL TREATMENT

Ensured animals in our care receive a health check, vaccines, permanent ID, were spayed or neutered and, if sick or injured, got further treatment.

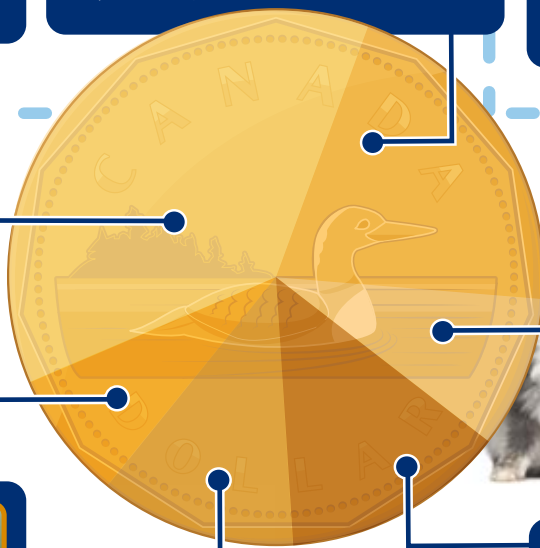


9¢\*

## ANIMAL PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS

Conducted **7,651** 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.

\*This represents direct investigation costs only.



20¢

\*Direct and indirect expenses total **\$10.25 million**.

Indirect expenses include sheltering and treatment for seized animals and the Animal Helpline which receives cruelty complaints.



7¢

## PREVENTING FUTURE SUFFERING

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



13¢

## SUPPORTING ANIMALS

Ensuring that our buildings are maintained, bills are paid and systems run is also part of caring for animals.



17¢

## MAKING FRIENDS FOR ANIMALS

Made it possible to help **167,890** animals in 2024 thanks to caring donors. Fundraising truly is friendraising! Thank you!



REVENUES (IN \$000s)	Oct. 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2024	Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023
Donations & Fundraising	\$23,536	\$24,889
Legacy & Life Insurance <sup>1</sup>	\$18,569	\$16,374
Kenneling & Municipal Bylaw Enforcement	\$3,316	\$3,451
Sheltering, Medical, Clinical & Social Enterprise Services	\$6,944	\$6,703
Lotteries & Raffles	\$4,519	\$4,108
Government Grants	\$493	\$12,516
Other Grants	\$410	\$956
Interest and Dividend Income	\$4,767	\$3,682
Capital Gains / Losses	\$80	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62,634</b>	<b>\$72,679</b>

EXPENDITURES (IN \$000s)	Oct. 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2024	Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023
Sheltering, Kenneling, Municipal Bylaw Enforcement & Social Enterprise	\$21,138	\$20,288
Veterinary Care & Spay/Neuter	\$5,253	\$5,299
Animal Protection <sup>2</sup>	\$5,741	\$5,877
Humane Education	\$1,551	\$1,181
Advocacy	\$2,704	\$1,909
Hospitals & Clinics	\$4,828	\$4,601
Administration & Program Support	\$7,461	\$6,922
Revenue Development	\$9,578	\$8,720
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$58,254</b>	<b>\$54,797</b>

Cents per dollar (previous page) includes only the above expenditures and does not include amortization.

TOTALS (IN \$000s)	Oct. 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2024	Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023
Operating Surplus Before the Undernoted	\$4,380	\$17,882
Amortization of Capital Assets	\$(2,528)	\$(2,649)
Change in Fair Value of Investments	\$4,957	\$891
<b>Net Operating Surplus</b>	<b>\$6,809</b>	<b>\$16,124</b>

Surpluses are often a result of being able to recognize restricted gifts received in prior years where the terms of the gift have now been met.



When we show a surplus, it allows us to fund facilities replacement and capital reserve, our operating reserve, and multi-year strategic priorities.

<sup>1</sup> A significant portion of legacy gifts are restricted to a particular use. Restricted gifts are not recognized as revenue in our financial statements until the terms of the restriction are met.

<sup>2</sup> Direct expenses related to the BC SPCA's Animal Protection work are presented here. Please see prev. page for combined direct and indirect costs.



# BUILDING A HOME FOR *Every Heart*

Our new Vancouver Island Animal Behaviour Centre will offer a safe space for the specialized care required to heal from not just physical, but physiological trauma

**W**hen an animal has a particularly hard start to life, it's overwhelming to be taken from a familiar (albeit difficult) environment and placed into care at a BC SPCA facility. They don't understand that the sudden attention comes from a place of love and safety. Instead, these animals are often scared, untrusting, and in need of patience and significant behavioural support to make sure that they not only find a forever home, but are emotionally prepared to live in it.

"Every BC SPCA animal care team member has an animal they will never forget. The one who needed just a little bit more. For me, that dog is Phoenix," explains Kim Monteith, manager, animal behaviour & welfare. "Phoenix came to the BC SPCA South Peace animal centre through our animal protection team after being hit by a car. He needed surgery to amputate a broken hind leg. Understandably, Phoenix was very fearful, but he was curious. He liked to keep an eye on things and would carefully observe his surroundings – so long as he didn't realize you knew he was looking."

Phoenix's journey to adoption through the BC SPCA was a long

one. Despite his fear, the dog never showed aggression towards staff or volunteers, but he often faced setbacks in learning to trust people again. In an early instance, Phoenix hid in his kennel for several hours after a collar was placed on his neck for the first time, not even coming out for treats.

The BC SPCA South Peace team worked tirelessly for months to support Phoenix with behaviour modification – from simple trust-building exercises like sitting quietly with him in his kennel to using positive reinforcement to get him comfortable with a leash and collar. Eventually, disruptions from the morning cleaning routine and the high stress of the busy animal centre began to impact Phoenix's progress, so he was transferred to the Lower Mainland for continued care and to work with behaviour experts while the BC SPCA searched for an appropriately skilled foster or permanent home.

In the Vancouver Island region, as many as 18 per cent of dogs and 30 per cent of cats coming into care need individualized behavioural plans like Phoenix did. Dedicated teams, just like the one at the BC SPCA South Peace, do everything

“It's funny when you think about a big celebration when a dog goes for a walk on a leash but, especially in cases like Phoenix's, these are the kinds of milestones that make all the difference in the animal's journey to finding a forever home.

they can to support every animal's unique requirements, but the bustling shelter setting isn't always the best place for that sort of care. Some animals, like Phoenix, need





On Thursday, November 21, 2024, a heartfelt ground blessing ceremony was held at the site of the Vancouver Island Animal Behaviour Centre in partnership with the Quw'utsun (Cowichan) Tribes.



Architectural renderings of the future Vancouver Island Animal Behaviour Centre.

care staff that helped Phoenix be ready to be loved in a home again.”

“I am so grateful to these incredibly dedicated team members and thrilled that Phoenix is still thriving with his loving family,” Monteith continues, “but situations

like his are exactly why the new Vancouver Island Animal Behaviour Centre will be such an important facility for animal welfare in B.C. Just think about how different Phoenix’s journey might have been with us, if he’d had a calm, regulated environment to heal in and a team of specialized staff and volunteers focused exclusively on his progress.”



Phoenix

more time in a calmer environment with specialized behaviour therapy in order to thrive.

The Vancouver Island Animal Behaviour Centre, currently under construction at the site of the old BC SPCA Cowichan animal centre, has been carefully designed to be this space. The new centre includes several unique features that will support managing, training and modifying behaviour, including a room that replicates a “real home” so animals who have never experienced a life indoors can become comfortable with that sort of domestic environment. From the elevated space to the dedicated team of behaviour specialists, the Vancouver Island Animal Behaviour Centre will offer Phoenix a better chance to see the comfort of a loving

home as quickly as possible.

“It’s funny when you think about a big celebration when a dog goes for a walk on a leash but, especially in cases like Phoenix’s, these are the kinds of milestones that make all the difference in the animal’s journey to finding a forever home,” says Monteith. “And it was the care and investment of BC SPCA animal



*VIABC is made possible through compassion and kindness from our community. To learn how you can build a home for every heart and give animals like Phoenix the special care they need before finding their loving forever home, please visit [behaviourcentre.spc.bc.ca](http://behaviourcentre.spc.bc.ca).* ■

# TIP OF THE Iceberg

The number of animals available for adoption on the BC SPCA's website represents only a fraction of the animals in our care. Many more will spend weeks and possibly months before they are ready to find a forever home.

**T**he “Adoptable Animals” page is one of the most visited on the BC SPCA website. Some people are actively looking to add an animal to their family. Others just like to keep tabs on who is available – waiting for that one photo, that one story that jumps out and forces them to schedule a meeting, the one little face you just can’t say no to.

On any given day, there are approximately 300 animals available for adoption on our site. This page is constantly fluctuating, with animals finding forever homes and new hopefuls being added. When you hear about the overwhelming numbers of animals in care that welfare organizations like the BC SPCA are managing, you might think that this number seems low, especially considering we have centres all across the province. Certainly, 300 is not an overwhelming total in itself.

“What most people don’t realize is that the number of animals available for adoption does not represent the total number of animals in our care,” says Adrienne McBride, the BC SPCA’s senior director, animal flow. “It is one of the biggest misconceptions about us. The number of animals on our adoption page is, on average, one-third of the total number of animals we are actively responsible for

treating, rehabilitating and getting ready to find their forever home.”

McBride explains that when animals arrive at the BC SPCA, many will need weeks if not longer before they are ready for adoption. Kittens are a great example. “In the spring, otherwise known as ‘kitten season,’ we will take many mothers and their kittens into our care. The kittens are not ready for adoption until they have been weaned from their mother, which is typically around eight weeks of age. Mothers and their kittens are placed with a BC SPCA foster as soon as possible when they come in. During that time all the costs to feed and care for them are covered by the BC SPCA.”

For example, on March 12 of this year, 291 adoptable animals were featured on the website. However, the actual total number in BC SPCA care was 905. Included in this total were 31 kittens and 15 puppies under eight weeks old. There were also 54 animals that had come in as strays, hoping to be reunited with their families. The BC SPCA is required to keep the animal in our care for an average of four days (the exact number of days differs with each municipality) before they can be made available for adoption. And that is only if the stray is healthy. Should any medical

treatment be required, then finding their forever home is put on hold until they are healthy enough.

Indeed, the reasons for holding animals before they can be made available for adoption are many.

## ► MEDICAL CARE

**Extensive treatment** is often necessary for the

patients who come to the BC SPCA.

“We see some of the province’s most vulnerable animals. Many have never seen a

veterinarian and have not received any preventative veterinary care,” says McBride. “In the first few days of an animal’s time with us, we are assessing their health and getting them caught up on basics like vaccinations, if required. In more serious cases, we are working to get them to a stable weight, dealing with severe flea infestations and parasites, healing infections, taking care of dental issues, and arranging for major surgeries and rehabilitation. This takes time. We may not be able to get them scheduled for surgery for a couple of weeks, especially in some of the more rural communities where there is less veterinary care available. In those cases, we may need to transfer animals to other locations in the province where the wait will not be so long.”



Magnus

## ► QUARANTINE

**When the BC SPCA** takes in large numbers of animals from a hoarding situation or



irresponsible breeders, they must be quarantined to ensure they are not carrying any infectious diseases that could be passed on to other animals, foster homes or people. “In the case of a breeder surrender, for example, we need to quarantine the dogs for a period of seven to 14 days until we get the results of their testing,” says McBride. “Because they have typically lived in close proximity, if one dog tests positive for an infectious disease like parvovirus, the likelihood the rest will is very high.”

### ► BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES

**It's not always physical trauma** that presents the greatest challenge for BC SPCA staff. “We give every dog the best chance of a forever home,” says McBride. “Many come to us having never lived indoors or walked on a leash. They need to be assessed and sometimes a special behaviour plan needs to be developed to support them.”

A prime example of this work is the story of a 14-month-old retriever named Pickles, one of five young dogs surrendered to the BC SPCA by their guardian after a complaint about their living conditions was called in to the animal helpline. “These dogs weren't socialized at all,” says McBride.



Pickles

Pickles

IN-CARE STATUS CATEGORY	NO. OF ANIMALS	PERCENTAGE
AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION	291	32.2%
PENDING SPAY/NEUTER	195	21.5%
PENDING VET EXAM, TREATMENT OR UNDER VET CARE	155	17.1%
IN GENERAL FOSTER	120	13.3%
UNDER STRAY HOLD	54	6.0%
PENDING ADOPTION	22	2.4%
EMERGENCY BOARDING	15	1.7%
PENDING BEHAVIOUR ASSESSMENT/ ON BEHAVIOUR PLAN	14	1.5%
UNDER PROTECTIVE CUSTODY HOLD	11	1.2%
AWAITING SORT	11	1.2%
HOLD (UNLISTED)	10	1.1%
PENDING TRANSFER	7	0.8%
<b>TOTAL IN CARE AS OF 8:40 A.M. MARCH 12, 2025</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

“Together with our animal welfare and behaviour manager, we put together a plan for Pickles.” The manager of our BC SPCA Burnaby animal centre worked with him for months to get him comfortable around people, comfortable on a leash and comfortable around other dogs. “Thanks to all this hard work, Pickles found a great forever home and a sister, a golden retriever named Harlow,” says McBride.

### ► PROTECTION INVESTIGATION DISPUTES

**As has been reported** in the past, protection investigation disputes can keep a rescued animal in the BC SPCA's care for months until the dispute is settled by the BC Farm Industry Review Board (BCFIRB). Since 2019, the BC SPCA has seen a 350 per cent increase in the number of disputes against animal removals resulting from protection

investigations, at a huge cost to both the organization and the animals' welfare. “We obviously support a system that gives people an opportunity to appeal a decision, but there are real costs to the process,” McBride explains. “Animals may wait months before we can put them up for adoption and find them forever homes.”

The heroes of these stories are the many volunteer fosters who give a temporary refuge to the animals while they wait to find their forever home. These fosters make it possible for us to keep animals who, for whatever reason, cannot be immediately adopted in a loving home environment until they are able to find their permanent homes. Their help is invaluable.

So, next time you are looking at all the adoptables on our website, remember they are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to animals receiving loving care at the BC SPCA. ■

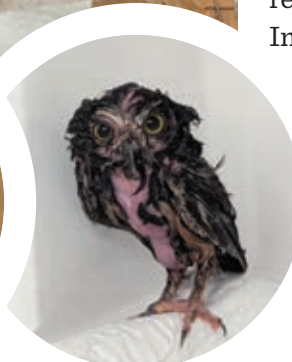
# Happy TAILS



A Northern Saw-whet Owl recuperates at Wild ARC.



Intake



After bath

## CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH II

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is one of the smallest owls in North America. The BC SPCA's Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre (Wild ARC) in Metchosin typically welcomes a few of these patients per year.

"But this little owl was different from most because of her condition," says Nadia Xenakis, the BC SPCA's wild animal welfare specialist. Xenakis explains that a kind-hearted person found the little bird sitting in the middle of a road in Sooke, unable to move. She was examined by Wild ARC staff, who found an unknown tar-like substance all over her feathers, beak and talons.

The expert staff at Wild ARC prepared a bath using a soap solution and water at a comfortable temperature. Xenakis stresses that this type of care should only be administered by professionals. "The risk of injuring yourself or causing additional stress or harm to the animal is just too high," she explains.

After her cleaning, the owl was placed in a recovery area at Wild ARC where she could rest and build up her strength. Six weeks

later, she was brought to a forested area on Vancouver Island and released back to the wild.

## A FURRY HAPPY FAMILY II

Out for a day of off-road recreation in Kelowna, Dave began unloading his mountain bike from the back of his pickup truck – only to notice a light reflecting off something down the embankment.

"When I saw the carrier, I figured it had been left there as garbage but I got this feeling I should check to make sure there wasn't an animal inside," Dave recalls. His instincts were spot-on. Inside was a dachshund, in dire need of assistance.

"I saw Wilfred – he was covered in feces and urine and so skinny," Dave continues. "His collar had been looped through the door so he couldn't move."

Dave and his partner Karen rushed the dog to an emergency veterinary clinic. He was emaciated, dehydrated, anemic



Wilfred: Before



Wilfred: After





Dusk and Dawn at their new forever farm.



Dawn napping with adopter.

and had a puncture through his upper lip and scars on his nose. The BC SPCA happily covered the costs of Wilfred's care.

Dave didn't just rescue Wilfred – he and Karen wanted to give him a forever home. They submitted an adoption application, and Wilfred was soon making friends with their Australian shepherd and poodle mix, Harper.

"They love to pull all of their toys out of the bin and play," says Karen. Not surprisingly, Wilfred has thoroughly bonded with Dave. "Every night, he sleeps curled up right beside him and Harper sleeps next to me. We are just so happy with our beautiful, furry family."

**BOVINE BESTIES** || Dawn, a water buffalo, and Dusk, a pregnant Holstein cow, were rescued from a property together. They lived in horrible conditions and, due to their restrictive diet of lentils, were both underweight. They had spent much of their time tethered, unable to move.

After the rescue, Dawn was immediately showing lots of love to the people around her at the BC SPCA's Good Shepherd Barn. "She would eagerly come running to

the gate when anyone would come visit her or feed her," says Layla Gilhooly, manager of the BC SPCA Surrey adoption and education centre, where the Good Shepherd Barn is located. "She would rest her head on our shoulders and would push her big wet snout at us so she could get the head scratches she loves so much."

Dusk was more cautious and would accept pets and a few scratches but preferred the company of her best friend Dawn. The two were bonded, and it was imperative that they be adopted together.

Thankfully, this moo-ing story has a happy ending, as these unlikely pals did find a forever home together! They will spend the rest of their lives together roaming fields, eating the best food and getting all the love they deserve.

## ONE-EYED SWEETHEART ||

A tiny kitten – quirkily nicknamed Mike Wazowski by BC SPCA staff – was rushed to a veterinary clinic on the Sunshine Coast. He had been attacked by a dog and suffered an eye injury so severe the eye had to be surgically removed.

"Even though he had been through so much, Mike was friendly and social, just like any other kitten," says Marika Donnelly, manager of the BC SPCA

Sunshine Coast animal centre.

Mike would eventually find his forever family in the form of couple Ashley and Gavin. And in a case of kitty kismet, he'd been making his way into their hearts long before they formally met him.

"We didn't know it at the time, but we watched Mike go into the veterinary clinic," Ashley reflects. "Then when we were at a housewarming party, we met the veterinarian who had operated on Mike and they suggested we foster him. The signs were all around us."

Since adoption, Mike has been renamed Uno – a playful nod to his medical condition. And indeed, the kitty formerly known as Mike Wazowski keeps his remaining eye trained on the things that matter most. "He is very affectionate and obsessed with his fishing-rod cat toy," says Ashley. "He comes into our bedroom at 6 a.m.

every morning and sits on our pillows, waiting patiently for us to wake up so he can get his cuddles." ■



Mike with fishing toy.



Mike Wazowski: Before

# ASK THE SPCA

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

## **I** just adopted a cat who likes to go outside. Is there a way to let her out safely, and is it even necessary?

Although it is not strictly necessary to give cats outdoor access, there are safe and controlled ways to provide outside time for cats who could benefit from added enrichment. That said, there are many benefits to keeping your new friend indoors, including protection from injuries, diseases and parasites, reduced risk of getting lost, safety from extreme weather, and protection from hazards such as cars and predators.

Contrary to popular belief, even cats accustomed to outdoor life can be transitioned to indoor life with appropriate stimulation and enrichment. Visit [spca.bc.ca/indoor](https://spca.bc.ca/indoor) for ideas on enriching the lives of indoor cats.

If you're considering letting your cat outside, it's essential to do so safely for them and others. Here are some tips:

► **BUILD A CATIO** These customizable patios are usually enclosed areas that are extensions of your living space, typically constructed just outside a door or window. They mimic an outdoor environment by offering sights, sounds and smells, plus enrichment items – climbing objects, perches, and hiding areas – all while protecting your feline friend from external dangers. Visit [spca.bc.ca/catio](https://spca.bc.ca/catio) for more information and catio plans.

► **HARNESS AND LEASH TRAINING** There are many benefits to training your cat to walk on a leash, such as engaging in natural behaviours, providing exercise, and ensuring they receive proper mental stimulation and enrichment. It is important to train your cat ahead of time in your home or fenced yard to ensure that they are comfortable in their harness. Bold, confident cats who aren't fearful of new things, and who respond well to reward-based training are ideal candidates. Make sure to go slow and pay attention to your cat to ensure they're enjoying the experience.



Keep your cat safe with a leash or a harness.



“ Contrary to popular belief, even cats accustomed to outdoor life can be transitioned to indoor life with appropriate stimulation and enrichment.”



► **SUPERVISE** Always monitor your cat when outside. A fenced backyard with tall barriers or rollers can help keep them within safe boundaries. Using a Birdsafe collar ([spca.bc.ca/shop](http://spca.bc.ca/shop)) helps protect wildlife. Note that this sort of training is also useful should your cat escape your property; just be sure the route back to you is safe before you start calling their name to coax them home.

Before bringing your cat into the yard or embarking on a leash walk, ensure they have permanent identification — a microchip or tattoo — and a break-away collar with an ID tag in case they get lost. Also, be sure they have up-to-date vaccines and are spayed/neutered.

## **I'm frustrated that my dog isn't doing what she's told. Nothing seems to work!**

It is exasperating when our dogs don't follow our commands. Luckily, diligent, thoughtful training can offer a solution. Yet, remember: the goal of training should always be to enhance our relationship with our canine companions, not to strive for strict obedience.

In the past, it was common for trainers to use punishment techniques, such as shock collars or choke chains, to gain compliance. Some trainers still do. But recent cognitive science has confirmed that while punishment may seem to get results, those sorts of approaches erode trust and lead to heightened anxiety and fear.

Dog training methodologies have shifted from dominance-based techniques focused on strict obedience to positive reinforcement strategies. In B.C., recent research has shown that 72 per cent of dog trainers acknowledge use of only reward-based training methods.\*

The science shows that dogs trained with positive reinforcement have greater trust and bonding with their human caregivers. Simply put, when dogs are relaxed and stress-free, they learn better. They don't feel anxious about making a mistake or fearful of being corrected through physical or emotional punishment (yelling or scolding).

One of the best ways to build trust and confidence is to allow the dog to make choices during training. For example, on walks, keep your dog on a leash, but allow her to choose which direction to go. Let your dog stop to inhale smells along the path. When she returns to you, offer a treat as reward. In fact, any time your dog makes eye contact or comes to you, offer a reward. When a dog is feeling anxious, a nice treat can also change their emotional state for the better.

In addition to building confidence, giving your dog choices helps reduce stress. When dogs feel they can control parts of their environment, they are less likely to experience anxiety. As a dog's confidence builds, they are better able





The right plants will turn your yard into a hotspot for hummingbirds and other wildlife.



White crown sparrow bathing in bird bath.



Oregon grape

to handle new situations, and are happier overall.

In summary, aim to build trust and confidence to form a mutual bond with your dog and focus less on blind obedience. When dogs can make choices, they become more engaged, confident, willing, and able to learn. For help with your training approach, consult a reward-based animal trainer, such as a BC SPCA-accredited AnimalKind trainer ([animalkind.ca](http://animalkind.ca)).

(\*See: *A Survey of the Professional Characteristics and Views of Dog Trainers in Canada* by Camila Cavalli and Nicole Fenwick, *Animals* 2025, 15(9), 1255; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani15091255>)

## I want to make my yard more wildlife friendly. Any advice?

As longer days and rising temperatures approach, you may be looking forward to spending more time outdoors or starting spring cleaning. This is also a busy time for wild animals, with many having babies or migrating. Here's

how to make some small changes in outdoor spaces around your home at the start of the season to protect and support wildlife through this crucial, transitional time!

➤ **CHECK FOR NESTS** Before you start your pruning and other yard work, check for bird, squirrel and rabbit nests that may be easily overlooked. If you have wild babies around your home, give them lots of space and time to raise their young.

➤ **CLEAN YOUR NEST BOXES AND BIRD FEEDERS** If you have nest boxes around your home, clean them out before use each year to prevent disease spread. Clean feeders regularly and remove them if you notice signs of sickness in birds. Also, the fallen bird seed below feeders should be promptly scooped up to avoid attracting rodents.

➤ **CHECK YOUR WINDOWS** Bird window collisions can occur year-round; however, migration is a particularly risky

“ When dogs are relaxed and stress-free, they learn better.”

time. This is one case where you can actually relax your cleaning schedule and leave windows dirty to provide a visible barrier, remove bird feeders near windows, or use specialized decals or tape placed in a checkered pattern to break up reflections.

➤ **PLANT NATIVE SPECIES** The safest way to attract wild animals to your outdoor spaces and support local wildlife is to plant native vegetation to provide natural cover and food sources. Consider native wildflowers and bushes to attract pollinators and nesting birds. You may be surprised by who shows up.

➤ **PROVIDE WATER** All wild animal species will be searching for a nice cool watering hole as temperatures rise, particularly if you live in an area at risk for wildfires. Consider providing a bird bath or a consistent water source for wild animals passing through. Check the water source daily to make sure it is clean and full.

➤ **HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN** You may encounter injured or orphaned wildlife in need of assistance. Be prepared by recording the number of your closest wildlife rehabilitation centre. If unsure, call the BC SPCA Animal Helpline for advice at 1.855.622.7722 or visit the Wildlife Rehabilitators' Network of BC at [wrnbc.org](http://wrnbc.org). ■



## APPLIED KNOWLEDGE

by Dr. Alexandra (Sasha) Protopopova

# THE DRUG CRISIS: A Pet's Perspective



**V**eterinarians across Canada have noticed a concerning trend in pets accidentally ingesting drugs, especially in cities where drug use is widespread. But what happens when their guardian is afraid to ask for help? Chloe Chambers, a former student in the UBC Animal Welfare Program and now a researcher at the University of Ottawa, aimed to find out.

Chambers led a study to determine how the stigma surrounding drug use can create hidden barriers to veterinary care, putting animals at risk. Feelings of shame, discrimination and fear can prevent someone from seeking the help they need not only for themselves, but for their beloved pet.

In the study, Chambers surveyed more than 100 guardians in Vancouver, several of whom had used veterinary outreach services. Some participants had experienced the nightmare of their pet ingesting drugs like opioids, cannabis or hallucinogens. Others were asked how they would react in a similar situation. Would they go to the vet? Would they feel safe telling the truth about what happened?

The results showed that stigma plays a significant role

in these decisions. Guardians who had previously experienced discrimination in healthcare or social services when advocating on their own behalf were more likely to fear being judged by a veterinarian. Some worried the vet would report them to authorities or even take their pet away. As a result, some participants said they would withhold information about what their pets ingested. A few admitted they would avoid seeking care altogether.

This is not just an animal welfare issue – it's a One Welfare issue. One Welfare emphasizes that the well-being of animals, people and their environments are interconnected. In this case, stigma – a human issue – affects animal health and welfare. The bond between people and their pets is especially strong for those facing challenges like housing instability or substance use. Fear of losing pets can prevent them from seeking help when they need it most.

The good news is that many guardians in the study felt confident recognizing poisoning symptoms and expressed a desire to help their pets. Many who had sought veterinary care also reported positive experiences. The message that emerges is that

people care about their pets and are willing to act in their best interests.

This research calls for veterinary clinics and animal welfare organizations to create stigma-free practices and outreach programs. It also highlights the importance of community programs, like the BC SPCA's volunteer-operated Charlie's Pet Food Bank ([spca.bc.ca/charlies](http://spca.bc.ca/charlies)) and Community Veterinary Outreach, which helped make the research successful.

By addressing these barriers, we not only help people, but also protect the animals they love. This is One Welfare in action. ■



*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."*

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