

# Veterinary update

Dear Colleagues,

Being faced with a case of animal cruelty or neglect is one of the most difficult things a veterinarian in practice may encounter. It's also something that happens to every veterinarian at some point.

A veterinarian is "the other family doctor." On the front lines of care, we may be the first and only health professional to recognize the signs of abuse in a home or neglect in a group or herd of animals. Animal abuse and neglect is linked to child, and elder abuse and domestic violence. Animal hoarders often face severe physical and mental health challenges. Often, where animals are suffering, people are also suffering- and vice versa.

Veterinarians are not just front-line care providers, but also valued expert witnesses in cruelty and neglect cases. Yet many veterinarians receive little or no training in veterinary forensics including recognizing signs of abuse, handling large-scale neglect cases, evidence collection, and case documentation and testimony. As well, veterinarians may struggle with sadness, frustration, and mental health issues while working on cruelty cases, especially if we do not access support resources early and often.

In the past few years, the BC SPCA has investigated an unprecedented number of large-scale cruelty cases involving companion animals. Many of you may recall seeing news about multiple seizures of 50-100 cats, dogs, and rabbits at one time from commercial breeding, boarding, and rescue facilities and animal hoarders. Studies, and our experience, show that animals from these environments have widespread infectious (often zoonotic) disease and behaviour problems relating to lack of socialization and confinement. Often, some animals are starving and/or have chronic untreated injuries and illnesses.

In addition to large scale-cases, we handle many individual cases. These range from sexual abuse to severe neglect cases and encompass every species imaginable. In every case, there is one or more veterinarians taking care of the animal(s), providing reports, and taking time away from their practice to testify before the BC Farm Industry Review Board and/or in court.

Would you know what to do if you were presented with a dog who had been "helicoptered" by his leash by a local trainer? Or sexually assaulted? What about a group of starving horses, reptiles living in squalid cages, or cats who were starving and had been eating their own kittens? Do you ever struggle with whether to report a client for failing to treat their animal?

Many of you have asked us for more support with these cases. We have heard you and made this a priority over the past year. Inside this newsletter you will find resources around some of the thornier issues relating to the Duty to Report.

We are also excited to introduce a comprehensive *Handbook for Veterinarians Assisting with BC SPCA Cruelty Cases*. This Handbook covers the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, details of how cruelty investigations work, the transition of animals into our shelters, and the elements of an effective report. Appendices provide forms, pain scales, species-specific standards, and a comprehensive listing of clinical signs, diagnostics, and evidence collection for various types of cruelty and neglect cases.

We are deeply grateful to the BC veterinarians and other experts who contributed to the Handbook. They are recognized throughout the document.

As a BC veterinarian, you can access the Handbook at [spca.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Vet-Handbook-for-CID-Cases.pdf](https://spca.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Vet-Handbook-for-CID-Cases.pdf). Whether you work with us, the RCMP, local police, municipal animal control or just want to be prepared for the next case, we hope you will find it useful.



*With deep gratitude for all you do,*

*Dr. Emilia Gordon  
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**Do you have questions or feedback for the BC SPCA?**

Please email us at [outreach@spca.bc.ca](mailto:outreach@spca.bc.ca)

*The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) is a not-for-profit organization reliant on donations from the public.*



## A veterinarian's duty to report

In the course of your veterinary practice, you may on occasion find yourself in a situation where you are dealing with an animal that has been abused, neglected or needs veterinary care due to being in distress and the owner is either unable or unwilling to provide that care.

In 2011 the PCA Act was amended by the Government of British Columbia to include a positive duty on the part of veterinarians to report instances where they believe an animal is in distress and is not receiving relief from that distress.

Veterinarians can find resources around duty to report at [spca.bc.ca/veterinarians](http://spca.bc.ca/veterinarians), including how to interpret duty to report and what happens when a report is made.

The BC SPCA regularly receives inquiries from veterinarians asking for clarification on when untreated dental or oral disease reaches the threshold of possible animal cruelty. Find a list of conditions that veterinarians should report if not treated based on the definitions of distress in the PCA Act in our resource section.



## Cat declawing ban update!

On May 4th, 2018 the College of Veterinarians of British Columbia (CVBC) made B.C. the second province in Canada to ban the practice of declawing cats, except in instances where there would be therapeutic value for the animal.

Earlier this year Nova Scotia became the first province to stop performing this procedure; with B.C. following suit we hope the two coasts will set an example for the rest of the country to follow. The BC SPCA applauds this decision as a major win for cats.

“For nearly two decades the BC SPCA has been on record opposing procedures such as declawing, tail docking, ear cropping, and devocalization that impact an animal’s ability to experience good welfare and to express natural behaviours” says Dr. Emilia, Senior Manager, Animal Health, BC SPCA.

Contrary to the name of the practice, declawing removes much more than the just the nails of the feline. Declawing a cat removes the bones of the cat’s toes, and is comparable to amputating all of a human’s fingers at the last knuckle. Additionally, recent studies have shown declawed cats may be more likely to bite, have back pain, and relieve themselves outside of their litter boxes.

Under the Veterinarians Act, the CVBC has the power to investigate and impose disciplinary action on veterinarians who ignore the new standard of practice. The Act allows disciplinary enforcement of non-compliance with bylaws and mandatory standards of practice, without distinction (ss. 52 and 61).

Read the new standard at [cvbc.ca](http://cvbc.ca).

## Animal Behaviour Science Symposium

The first annual Animal Behaviour Science Symposium took place June 2-3, 2018 at Executive Suites Hotel & Conference Centre in Burnaby, B.C. With over 200 attendees, the event was a great success. The majority of attendees were veterinarians, veterinary technicians & staff, and professional dog trainers.

The theme for this conference was ‘Canine Anxiety’. Speakers including Chirag Patel PG Cert (CAB) CPBC, DipCABT, Rebecca

Ledger PhD, FRSB, Claudia Richter, DVM, and Zazie Todd, PhD, presented on various topics including Separation Anxiety, Desensitization and Counter-conditioning, and Psychopharmacology.

Plans are already underway for the next year’s conference – stay tuned and don’t miss your chance to attend this unique cross-professional event.

Questions about future events can be directed to: [abss@spca.bc.ca](mailto:abss@spca.bc.ca)



## BC SPCA Shelter Medicine Quick Reference: Treatment of Common Infectious Conditions

We are excited to share our new *Shelter Medicine Quick Reference Guide* with BCSPCA veterinarians. This guide outlines clinical signs, diagnostics, treatment, biosecurity, and follow-up for common bacterial, fungal, parasitic, and viral diseases that can affect individuals and populations in shelters. The focus is on “herd health” and content is based on studies, best practices guidelines, and our experience in BCSPCA shelters. The Guidelines describe our internal protocols, but the information may be useful for any veterinarian working with shelter or rescue animals.

The Guidelines also contain a note reminding branches that with the exception of treatment “per protocol” or in consultation with our Animal Health program for uncomplicated parasitic diseases and ringworm in animals confirmed or suspected to have these conditions, all BC SPCA shelter animals requiring medications must be examined by a community vet and have medications prescribed for them. Under no circumstances may shelter staff “prescribe” or start antibiotics or pharmaceuticals, including eye and ear medications, without a veterinary exam.

Veterinarians can access the Shelter Medicine Quick Reference Guide at [spca.bc.ca/veterinarians](http://spca.bc.ca/veterinarians) using the password here **BCVET2018**. As this resource contains dosing information, we ask that it not be shared with anyone who is not a BC-licensed veterinarian.

## The Dr. Carol Morgan Memorial Award

Last year equine veterinarian Dr. Susi Cienciala (pictured below) of Deep Creek Veterinary Services was the recipient of the first-ever Dr. Carol Morgan Memorial Award, intended to support continuing education for veterinarians in Canada. Her goal is to bring the science of how horses learn to veterinary students in Canada, to both improve the welfare of their patients and to keep them safer as equine veterinary practitioners.

### Apply for this year

Are you a veterinary professional looking to expand your ethics training? This annual award is open to any practicing veterinarian in Canada to use for continued education and training-related costs in ethics and/or animal welfare.

Dr. Carol Morgan cared deeply for the welfare of all animals and advocated tirelessly on their behalf. A continuing education fund established with the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada honours her dedication to the ethical practice of veterinary medicine to improve the welfare of all animals.

Application deadline is October 15th for courses to be taken in the following year. Submit application forms to Dr. Sara Dubois, [sdubois@spca.bc.ca](mailto:sdubois@spca.bc.ca)

Recipients will be notified by December 31st. To apply, visit: [awfc.ca/grants/the-dr-carol-morgan-memorial-award](http://awfc.ca/grants/the-dr-carol-morgan-memorial-award).





**AnimalKind**  
BCSPCA Accredited

## AnimalKind pilot dog training standards

AnimalKind is the BC SPCA's new animal welfare accreditation and referral program for animal-related businesses.

We have just published AnimalKind pilot dog training standards and we are looking for input from veterinarians, veterinary technicians and the wider community. To date, development of the standards has included reviews by 9 external training and academic experts, an online survey of B.C. dog trainers, and one-on-one meetings with 36 dog trainers in multiple B.C. communities (Lower Mainland, Victoria, Kamloops, Kelowna and Nanaimo). We are extremely grateful to everyone for sharing their expertise and opinions!

Our goal is to create a community of dog trainers who use science-based practices and share animal welfare values. Help us create an AnimalKind community by visiting [animalkind.ca](http://animalkind.ca) to read the standards and by sharing your feedback before October 31, 2018.

**Do you have questions or feedback for the BC SPCA?**

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## A new standard with a new scientific understanding of what dogs' need

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association released the 2018 Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations in April. The document is designed for breeders, kennel operators, guardians of working dogs, veterinarians, and people who are interested in buying a dog. It includes requirements for food and water, medical care, breeding genetics and soundness, enrichment, training, socialization, emergency planning, grooming, transport and euthanasia.

The 2007 version of this document is referenced in legislation in B.C. and we are hopeful that the legislation will be updated to include the 2018 version.

The document is written to encourage a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR). It recognizes the importance of discretionary decision-making and many requirements will refer to 'as directed by' a veterinarian. The veterinarian who partners with a kennel or breeder is aware of the geographic area in regards to vaccines and parasite treatment. They also are able to help with decision-making around whether to breed a dog. The Kennel Code provides more information about making that decision, including removing dogs from the breeding program that are not able to see or breathe normally, are not physically fit or able to run freely, and are not able to give birth to viable offspring.

The code requires caregivers to use positive-reinforcement methods for routine handling and restraint, and focuses on minimizing fear, pain, stress and suffering. Additionally, working dogs are expected to work willingly and within their capabilities, given appropriate rest and play periods. The Code acknowledges that dogs are social and requires enrichment strategies including toys, training, exercise, and affection; dogs must have at least 30 minutes per day of direct contact with humans.

This Code acknowledges the importance that early positive experiences have on a dog's entire life, resulting in that dog's well-being and the safety of the community where the dog lives. The Code is available at:

[canadianveterinarians.net/documents/Code-of-Practice-for-Canadian-Kennel-Operations](http://canadianveterinarians.net/documents/Code-of-Practice-for-Canadian-Kennel-Operations).