

Dear Colleagues,

Last summer, I used this space to write to you about animal cruelty and neglect and share some new resources for veterinarians dealing with these cases. This time around, I'd like to talk about something much more uplifting- kittens!

Kitten season is right around the corner. Veterinarians are already seeing in-heat and pregnant cats in practices across B.C. If you work directly with a BC SPCA sheltering branch, you likely are accustomed to an influx of kittens needing treatment and spay/neuter surgery from spring right through fall. We have small numbers of kittens coming in throughout the winter. Last year, we adopted out nearly 4,500 kittens.

Kittens, while adorable, come with a multitude of challenges. Many kittens are presented to veterinarians and animal shelters after being found abandoned. Unweaned kittens may have moms nearby and should not be moved unless they are in danger or truly abandoned. Our resource for what to do when kittens are found may be helpful to give to clients and can be found at spca.bc.ca/faqs/adopted-kittens.

Kittens under the age of 4 weeks who are orphaned or abandoned commonly present with failure to thrive, neonatal sepsis, hypothermia, diarrhea, and constipation (particularly if bottle-fed). If treated supportively, these kittens often will do well and survival rates can greatly exceed the often-quoted "40-50%" statistic. Survival rates of 85% or higher are possible with timely care, meaning intervention occurs at the first sign of inadequate weight gain or any other sign of illness.

Kittens over the age of 4 weeks often present with infectious disease including GI parasites, ringworm, external parasites, URI, and panleukopenia. We are also seeing feline lungworm on Vancouver Island and along the Sunshine Coast.

Our policy is that all kittens under the age of 8 weeks must be in foster homes and not housed in our shelters. This allows for proper socialization and minimizes exposure to infectious disease before kittens are old enough for spay/neuter. This month we are releasing a new foster manual on cat/kitten care that is full of useful references including feeding information and developmental milestones. This manual will be available on our website by the end of March.

And just in time for kitten season, BC-licensed vets can access a summary of our shelter medicine infectious disease protocols here (spca.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/BC-SPCA-Shelter-Medicine-Quick-Reference-Common-Infectious-Diseases.pdf). You can access this using the password BCNET2018, and because this reference contains dosing information, we ask that it only be shared with BC-licensed vets. Inside this newsletter you will also find links to new resources for veterinarians around pediatric spay/neuter.



Wishing you a healthy (and adorable) kitten season and with gratitude for all you do,

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Do you have questions or feedback for the BC SPCA?

Please email us at 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.

New AnimalKind accreditation program helps dog owners find the right trainer

The BC SPCA has launched an innovative program to accredit dog training businesses in British Columbia. The AnimalKind program sets out science-based, training standards to ensure humane treatment for dogs and peace of mind for their owners.

Each year, the BC SPCA gets hundreds of calls from dog owners seeking guidance on how to find a good trainer and until now has not had a process to assess trainers or make a referral.

Dr. Karen van Haften, the BC SPCA's senior manager of behaviour and welfare and a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviourists, says scientific research across North American and Europe unequivocally supports the use of reward-based training. "There is an extensive body of research comparing dog training methods, and the studies conclude that dogs learn as well or better with positive reinforcement," she says.



Six companies are now accredited: Bravo Dog Training & Behaviour Consulting (North Vancouver), Cowichan Canine Behaviour & Training Ltd (Duncan), Ethical Canine Training and Behaviour Modification (Victoria), Ocean Park Dog Training (Surrey), Positive Dog (Nanaimo) and Yaletown Dog Training (Vancouver).

The new AnimalKind standards were developed after a thorough review of scientific research, feedback from

international animal behaviour and dog training experts, and in-person consultations with 36 dog trainers from B.C. A public comment period was carried out to gather additional feedback from dog trainers, community veterinarians, animal behaviour associations, kennel clubs, service dog organizations and other humane organizations. The standards allow only humane, rewards-based training and do not include any aversive methods that use punishment, confrontation, intimidation or have the potential to cause physical or psychological harm to the dog.

The BC SPCA launched the first set of AnimalKind standards, for pest management companies, in 2018. The BC SPCA, Vancouver Foundation and the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies provided funding to establish the program.

To learn more about AnimalKind accreditation, or to find a trainer near you, visit animakind.ca/dogtraining

BC SPCA Animal Behaviour Science Symposium



Tickets are on sale now for the 2019 BC SPCA Animal Behaviour Science Symposium, taking place on June 7 to June 10, 2019 at the Delta Burnaby Hotel and Conference Centre.

We invite veterinarians and their teams to take part in a weekend of learning, networking, and fun as we learn from a highly qualified and diverse line-up of veterinary professionals, veterinary behaviourists, science-based animal trainers, and animal welfare professionals. This year's event will feature all-star speakers and we are thrilled to be hosting Jean Donaldson, Director of the Academy of Dog Trainers, as our 2019 Keynote Speaker.

This event has multiple session tracks and optional workshops based on attendees' professions and interests. Topics will include: canine and feline aggression, collaboration between the veterinary and training industries, standards of care in animal welfare, and much more. Continuing education credits will be available for veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians, veterinary behaviourists, and trainers. For complete program details and to purchase tickets, please visit our website: animalbehavioursymposium.ca

If you have any questions or are interested in sponsoring this event, please contact the event team at: abss@spca.bc.ca

Port Alberni veterinarian wins award to further studies in veterinary forensics



Dr. Holly Tillotson of Pacific Rim Veterinary Hospital in Port Alberni has been recognized for her work in veterinary forensics with this year's Dr. Carol Morgan Memorial Award. The award was established by the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada (AWFC) in honour of Dr. Carol Morgan, a tireless advocate for animal welfare and ethical veterinary practice and former BC SPCA board member, who died in 2015.

Veterinary forensics is an emerging discipline that applies the most advanced investigatory techniques in solving crimes against animals. Dr. Tillotson is a passionate advocate about this work. "Throughout my life in small animal practice I have assisted the BC SPCA in cases of cruelty, neglect, and participated in search and seizure situations," she says. "I was introduced early on to veterinary forensics before it was an actual discipline. Over the past ten-fifteen years, the field has changed dramatically."

Dr. Tillotson will use the Dr. Carol Morgan Memorial Award to further her studies by attending the International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Association annual conference in May 2019. "Presently there are few veterinarians with any training in forensics, especially in Canada. The dilemma our profession faces is that while we want to assist in the investigation of crimes against animals, we need additional training to play a more meaningful role."

In addition to her busy small animal practice in Port Alberni, Dr. Tillotson works closely

with the Port Alberni SPCA and is also involved with the First Nations community of Ahoushat, on Flores Island near Tofino. Each month, the veterinary outreach team sees dogs and some cats from the community and provides education on animal health and welfare.

Last year's award recipient, Dr. Susi Cienčila used her grant towards an online diploma in equitation science, which focuses on how horses learn, by studying the behaviour and cognition of horses.

The legacy of former BC SPCA board member Dr. Carol Morgan continues to be exemplified in the work of these outstanding veterinarians working to increase the knowledge of the veterinary community in areas of animal welfare and ethics. Stay tuned for the announcement of this year's grant application in our Summer newsletter.

Shock collars: "easy fix" or dangerous tool?

Of all the aversive training tools available to dog owners in B.C., shock collars have the most evidence that they directly harm dog welfare.

The use of shock collars in dog training has been associated in multiple studies with negative acute outcomes including stress-related behaviours (yelping, lowered tail and ear position, lip licking) and physiologic signs of stress (increased heart rate and salivary cortisol). Their long-term use is associated with increased risks of aggression, fear, anxiety-related behaviour problems, and fear of the handler/owner.

Imprecise timing of the shock (common with dog owners & novice trainers) can lead to dogs developing aversions to unintended triggers. Even when used by skilled trainers, shock collars have never been shown to be more effective than rewards-based training.

As Ian Dunbar (veterinarian & animal behaviour PhD) once said:

**"To use shock as an effective dog training method you will need:
A thorough understanding of canine behavior.
A thorough understanding of learning theory.
Impeccable timing.**

And if you have those three things, you don't need a shock collar."

Many dog owners turn to shock collars as a 'quick fix' for problematic behaviours, usually unaware of the evidence that this tool harms dog welfare. This is why the BC SPCA has launched a No Shock campaign. Visit our website to learn more about the evidence and humane alternatives: spca.bc.ca/ways-to-help/take-action/animals-in-the-home/the-shocking-truth-about-electronic-collars.

Trap-Neuter-Return funding available for veterinarians!

Are you a veterinarian with an interest in addressing the community cat overpopulation in your area? The BC SPCA Community Animal Spay Neuter grant provides funding to groups, including veterinary clinics, to trap-neuter-return community cats. Additional funding is also available for work to fix free-roaming cats on First Nation lands. We look forward to assisting veterinarians doing important work in their communities.

The deadline to submit an application is March 15th, 2019. Learn all the details and find application materials at spca.bc.ca/spayneutergant

New pediatric spay/neuter resources available

Public awareness of decision-making around the timing of spay/neuter surgery for cats and dogs is shifting, and we are receiving more questions from both veterinarians and the public. We are committed to 100% pre-adoption spay/neuter for dogs, cats, and rabbits and are deeply grateful to the hundreds of B.C. veterinarians who perform these procedures for BC SPCA animals.

All major veterinary professional and animal welfare organizations in North America support pediatric spay/neuter for shelter animals. We've recently added several new resources to our website including materials for veterinarians interested in doing or learning more about these procedures, a brief literature review, and information about high-volume spay/neuter clinics. Check out these resources at spca.bc.ca/veterinarians.



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Helping people help animals: A new strategic plan for the BC SPCA

After a year of consultation with stakeholders across the province, the BC SPCA has recently launched an exciting new five-year strategic plan. The 2019-2023 Strategic Plan prioritizes animals in our communities by empowering British Columbians to improve their welfare.

The strategic plan's four key pillars lay the foundation for the BC SPCA to make a positive impact on animal lives in the next five years:

1. The Protect pillar will focus on improving response to animal cruelty complaints, particularly in underserved communities. This will be accomplished through an evaluation of our own services and increased collaboration with other enforcement and social service agencies.
2. The Care pillar will centre on providing good welfare to animals both in our facilities and the greater community. Our AnimalKind accreditation program, outreach programming and specialized attention to complex medical and behavioural cases are a few of the ways in which this pillar will achieve these objectives. Our commitment to these animals is made possible due to the work, expertise, and partnership of B.C. veterinarians.
3. The Inspire pillar aims to make evidence-based improvements to the lives of animals through a continued focus on humane education, advocacy and research in partnership with the UBC Animal Welfare Program.
4. The Grow pillar will ensure a strong future for the organization through specialized training, financial integrity, innovative facility design and effective governance.

Past and current BC SPCA initiatives have already made tremendous progress in positively influencing the welfare of animals in B.C. As we embark on a new strategic plan, we look forward to an opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues in the veterinary community to create a better future for British Columbia's animals and their people.

For questions about the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, please contact Tess Morgan, Officer, Governance and Strategy at tmorgan@spca.bc.ca.