

COW FARTS  GUINEA PIG CONDOS  FELINE FACTS

kids speaking for animals Vol. 16 • No. 4

BCSPCA

Bark!

**ARE YOU
READY FOR
A DOG?**

**Inside the
exotic
pet trade**

High Paws

KIDS HELPING ANIMALS!



Steven, 11, sold handmade cards at his school and Boy Scout troop meetings. He raised \$530 for the Vancouver SPCA.



Ten-year-olds Charlotte and Tia teamed up for their birthdays to raise \$77 for the Vancouver SPCA.



Ms. Machado's Grade 6 immersion class sold homemade French foods and raised \$250.35 for the Nelson SPCA. Merci beaucoup!



Letterbox

(letters to the editor)

Dear BC SPCA,
I love all animals. I like cats most – I have an orange one named Pumpkin. She sleeps 24/7 and also likes watching TV. Pumpkin can stay very still sometimes, so that a friend once thought she was a stuffed animal! But she also races all over the place, even though she is 15 years old.

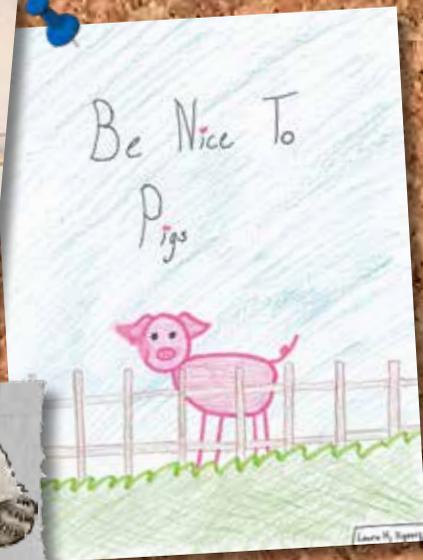
The BC SPCA is awesome! I'm thinking of starting a lemonade stand and giving the money to the animals.

Sincerely,
Gloria Collins, 9, Vancouver



Jessica, 10, donated \$115 in allowance money to the West Vancouver SPCA. This long-time animal lover has been supporting the BC SPCA for three years, through our Kids Club and summer camps.

Pet Pals



Pet Pals, from left: Reese Boake, 11, Lake Country; Amanda Richards, 10, Kelowna; Laura Harms, 11, Prince George.



Shoji, 5, asked guests to donate to animals instead of giving him presents for his birthday. He raised \$90 for the Coquitlam SPCA.



Oscar, 8, hosted a lemonade stand with his siblings. They collected \$20 for the Kelowna SPCA.



Antek, 11, wrote a book about an adoption. He donated it to the Coquitlam SPCA Book Buddies program, where kids can read to shelter cats to help socialize them.



Tanner and Tyson, both 10, dropped off \$255.85 at the Coquitlam SPCA on behalf of their school, Aspenwood Elementary. Along with their classmates, they held a young entrepreneur fair to raise funds for the animals.



The Salmon Arm Pathfinders Girl Guides stitched up old shirts to make cat beds for the Shuswap SPCA. What a wonderful way to recycle while keeping animals warm!



Nick, 7, and Kate, 10, sold Tang over the summer to raise \$195 for the BC SPCA. The pair is pictured here with their Auntie Elaine.

Write to us! BC SPCA Kids Club
1245 East 7th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5T 1R1
Email us! kids@spca.bc.ca



Garrett, 11, collected \$100 in birthday money for the Pentiction SPCA.



Ylanna, 8, donated \$54 in birthday money to the Richmond SPCA. This is the second year in a row she has donated to the BC SPCA!



Jenny made and sold homemade sock stuffies, and raised \$410 for the Squamish SPCA.



Are you ready to get a dog?

Dogs make wonderful companions. Yet, they are also a huge responsibility. Is your family ready to adopt a dog? Test if you think your family is prepared by carefully considering these questions.



First off, are you allowed to have a dog where you live?

Some places are not pet-friendly, while others may only allow cats or small dogs.

Does everyone in your family want a dog?

Everyone should be in agreement to get a dog. After all, your dog will be part of the family.



Can your family afford a dog?

There are real costs when you have a dog. Initial expenses include the adoption fee, spay/neuter, training classes, microchip ID, leash, collar, harness, crate, bowls, toys and a dog bed. The ongoing costs include food, treats, vet insurance, teeth cleaning, grooming, licenses, replacement toys, beds and leashes . . . and more.

Yikes, this adds up! Can you guess the average yearly cost of having a medium-sized dog? Is it \$500, \$1,200 or \$2,500? Trick question! Teeth cleaning alone costs between \$800 and \$1500. So it will cost at least \$1,200 but likely closer to \$2,500.



Is this your first dog?

There is a lot to know when you have a dog. Things like how to train your dog using humane, reward-based methods. Knowing to look for health issues like ear mites, fleas and ticks or food allergies. Learn more by reading care books and info online. Also talk to SPCA shelter staff and people you know who have dogs.

How will having a dog change your family?

You will be caring for him for his whole life – 11 years on average. There are plenty of not-so-fun things, like walking him in the pouring rain when you would rather stay inside. Cleaning up his messes when you feel like playing video games instead. Waking up early on the weekends to take him out for a bathroom break.

What are the great things?

You will enjoy playing together – games like hide-and-seek, chase and fetch. Reading books while he dozes beside you. Having a buddy to just hang out with. There's nothing better than coming home from school to a wagging tail.

Being a dog guardian is both work AND fun. Is your family ready to make the commitment?

Where to get your pet

Make the BC SPCA your first adoption option! BC SPCA shelters have dogs of all different ages, colours, sizes and shapes to choose from – even purebreds. Check out our adoptable listings at bcpetsearch.com.

More adoption options

You can also find your new companion through a breed rescue or responsible breeder. Visit spca.bc.ca/breeders to learn how to spot a good breeder.

Where NOT to get a dog

Avoid puppy mills. Puppy mills are places where dogs are bred in large numbers and sold through pet stores or on the internet just to make money. The dogs are often kept in very poor conditions. Most do not receive the medical care or the socialization they need to be good companions.

Don't go by looks or "breed" alone

It may be tempting to get a certain breed because you've seen one in a movie or on television. Do your research first! Talk to people who have the breed you are interested in. Find out what the dogs are really like to live with. See whether the breed has any health issues. Above all, keep an open mind! Mixed-breed dogs make awesome pets, too.



Dogs have different personalities

How dogs look has little to do with their personalities. Just because your friend has a calm, relaxed Jack Russell terrier doesn't mean they are all like that – they're not! Some dogs are shy and anxious, while others are excitable and outgoing. Some are very people-focused. Others are more independent. Choosing a dog based on his personality rather than his looks tends to lead to a better relationship.



Take a bite out of global warming

The biggest reason for burning down the tropical rainforests is for beef production — to either grow crops for cattle or let cattle graze the land.

With all the talk of **climate change**, how can you help? One thing to consider is eating less meat. Raising farm animals affects the planet in lots of ways. Huge amounts of water and land are used to raise farm animals. In South America, for example, the biggest reason for **cutting down the tropical rainforests** is for beef production — to either grow crops for cattle or let cattle graze the land.

In addition, farm animal manure often gets into waterways, causing **unsafe drinking water** and making it hard for fish to survive. A lot of water is used for the animals to drink and to water the crops that feed the animals. (Growing crops for people to eat uses a lot of water, too, but not as much.)

Dairy and beef cattle also produce **methane gas** by burping and, yes, farting a lot! Methane gas, like **carbon dioxide**, is a **greenhouse gas**. In fact, methane is about 30 times worse for global warming. A single cow, on average, releases 70 to 120 kilograms of methane per year. If you multiply that by the world's 1.5 billion cows, that's a huge amount of gas!

Of course, eating less meat is also kinder to the animals. Fewer animals will need to be raised if we cut our meat intake.

Not only does eating less meat help the environment and animals, eating more fruits and vegetables is healthy for people and generally costs less. For these reasons, many people are switching to a more **plant-based diet**.

Sometimes it's hard to eat vegetarian if your family and friends eat meat. You can suggest your family try eating meatless once or twice a week (a Meatless Monday and Friday, for example).



If you can't skip meat at home, you can when you go out to eat. It's easier than ever to order a **meatless meal** like a plant-based burger. If you don't see anything meatless on the menu, ask the restaurant server if they can do a veggie option (for example, a meatless pasta).

Let your favourite restaurant or fast food joint know you'd like them to carry vegetarian options. **You can make a difference, one meal at a time!**



Where am I from?

Walk into a pet store, and you might see all sorts of exotic animals like parrots, snakes, lizards, frogs and tortoises for sale. It's easy to believe you've stepped into a zoo!

Actually, a pet store is a bit more like a zoo than you might think. Those exotic animals on display are wild animals from other countries!

That means seeing a bearded dragon for sale here is basically like seeing a raccoon for sale in a pet store in Australia. Raccoons are native to B.C. They've evolved over millions of years to thrive in our ecosystem. The same goes for bearded dragons. They're superbly adapted to their natural habitat on the other side of the world.

Wait... what?
I'm no pet!



Wait... what?
I'm now a pet?



GARY BENDIG

Both are wild animals, which means both have complex needs that are challenging to meet in captivity. So it makes sense that it's against the law in B.C. to keep raccoons as pets. But, strangely enough, it's completely legal to have bearded dragons!

You might be wondering how wild animals like bearded dragons find their way into pet stores here when they come from such faraway places. Sadly, the journey is a dangerous one. Turn the page to learn more.

Red-footed tortoises like me come from South American forests.



We veiled chameleons are native to mountains and valleys in Saudi Arabia and Yemen.



I'm a green-cheeked conure, and I live in the woodlands of South America.



I'm a ball python. My home is in the grasslands of Africa.



I'm a White's tree frog. I belong in the forests of Australia and New Guinea.



A Dangerous Journey

Did you know that, right now, hundreds of thousands of exotic animals are being transported around the world to be sold as pets?

Some are born and raised in captivity. Others are taken from the wild. Often, they change hands several times before finally ending up in a pet store.

Sadly, no matter where they come from, exotic animals suffer along the way.



Born to be wild

For exotic animals living in the wild, being captured is extremely stressful. Some are caught in snares, nets or buckets. Others are chased and pulled from hiding spots, or lured onto sticky traps. Apart from being frightened, many animals are injured in the process.

Aren't there laws to stop wild capture?

Often, it's illegal to take exotic animals from the wild. But people do it anyway because of the money they make from selling them. It's cheaper to capture wild animals than breed them in captivity.

Captive breeding blues

Exotic animals born and raised in captivity don't face the stress of capture. But they can still suffer.

Most breeders use very simple housing. That way, they can feed, clean and watch their animals more easily. But this also means there's nothing for the animals to do. The housing is so simple that it only meets their basic needs.



Breeding snakes spend most of their lives in a drawer.

Exotic animals aren't like cats or dogs

Even when they're raised by people, exotic animals aren't domesticated like cats or dogs. They still have the same needs as wild animals – needs like hunting, burrowing, climbing, swimming and flying.

Reptile ranches

Very large breeding operations are called ranches. They raise huge numbers of reptiles like turtles and lizards. Some ranches also get away with bringing in exotic animals illegally taken from the wild. There's no way to tell the difference between the wild ones and the ones bred in captivity.



Troubling transport

Exotic animals are shipped in all sorts of containers like boxes, bags, buckets, wooden crates and plastic tubs. Often, they're crammed together so tightly that some are crushed. Sometimes, they're packaged up individually with hardly any room to move.

The animals are then transported in cars or trucks or on planes, usually without food or water. Many do not survive the long journey.

Deadly dealers

Some pet stores buy their exotic animals directly from breeders. Others get theirs from dealers who house lots of different species together in warehouses.

These warehouses usually keep animals in poor conditions. The enclosures are often dirty and overcrowded. There's nowhere for the animals to hide. The correct heating and lighting aren't used. The animals aren't fed properly. They're handled roughly.

Animals who become sick or injured don't get the medical care they need. But the dealers aren't very concerned when animals die.

They sell enough live ones to still make a profit.



What can you do?

What happens to exotic animals on their way to a pet store is very sad. It can be overwhelming to think of how many need our help. But you can make a difference!

Write a letter to your local pet store. Let them know how concerned you are about the exotic pet trade. Ask them not to sell exotic animals because of how much they suffer.

Talk to your friends and family about the harms of the exotic pet trade.

Think carefully before you get any pet, but especially an exotic animal. Thoroughly research their care needs. **Exotic animals are wild animals.** Even zoos have difficulty meeting their needs properly!

If you have an exotic animal already, try your best to provide your pet with the **Five Freedoms**. House them in the largest possible habitat. Find a veterinarian who knows how to care for pets like yours. Give them the best quality of life you can!



Happily **EVER** Afters

At the BC SPCA, we love nothing more than seeing animals who have overcome hardship find their happy endings. Here are four of those stories.



Cozy's close call

Before **Cozy** arrived at the Maple Ridge SPCA, he was hit by a car – twice! Despite serious injuries, the brave puppy managed to limp his way home. But instead of rushing Cozy to a veterinarian, his owner left him outside in the backyard. There he stayed, whimpering in pain for a whole week. Luckily, concerned witnesses called the BC SPCA animal cruelty hotline. Because Cozy was not receiving proper medical care, the SPCA was able to seize the pup and rush him to a veterinarian.

After a successful surgery, Cozy spent six weeks recovering in a foster home before being adopted into a devoted forever home. Thanks to kind-hearted people who reached out to the SPCA, this brave survivor is now safe and happy!

Hope for neglected horse

When the BC SPCA rescued 27 horses from a Langley farm, **Thor** was suffering from severe neglect. As the oldest of the horses, he had spent many years hungry and cold, living in filthy, dangerous conditions without proper medical care. Despite his struggles, Thor was an inspiration. Even after everything he had been through, he remained sweet and gentle. He proved how strong and resilient animals can be in the face of cruelty.

When Kaitlyn heard of Thor's story, she knew that she had to help him retire in comfort. So she immediately contacted the SPCA to set up a visit, and then made arrangements to bring Thor home. Now, 28-year-old Thor lives a happy and comfortable life, complete with lots of attention from the students at Kaitlyn's horseback riding business. You can follow Thor's journey on Instagram and see him enjoy his golden years at [@the.story.of.thor](#).





Left: Mystic recovering from surgery. Above: being loved by his new mom, Cat!

Mystic loses a leg, finds a miracle

Mystic lived through a terrible act of cruelty: he was shot five times with a BB gun. When he came to the Nanaimo SPCA, this shy black cat had to go through surgery to remove the pellets. Veterinarians also had to amputate his leg, which was badly broken. After he recovered, an experienced cat lover adopted him into a new life full of love and care.

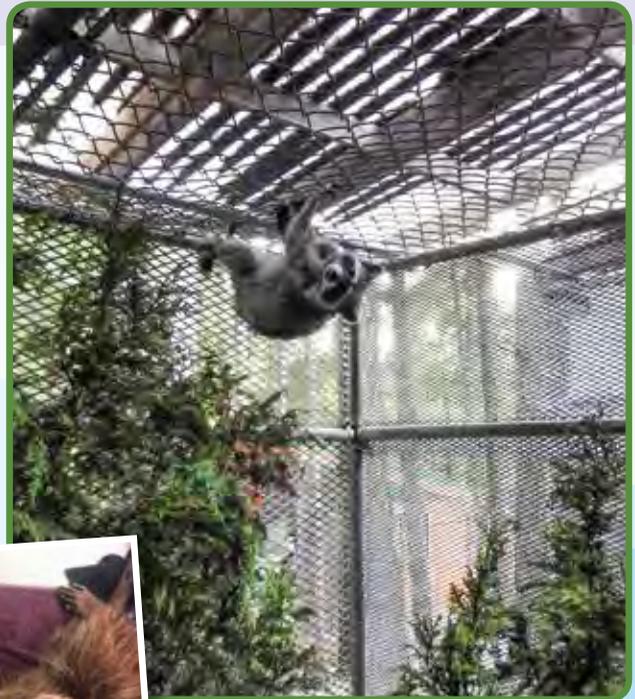
His new guardian—coincidentally named Cat!—is the perfect family for Mystic. She goes above and beyond to make him feel at home. She even built him a custom litter box for a three-legged cat! Through her hard work and love, Mystic is now blossoming.

Tangled Raccoon Rescued

This summer, a wild raccoon had a horrible accident. He got caught in fish netting. After trying to fight himself free for a whole day, he was severely injured and traumatized. Luckily, witnesses spotted him and called the **BC SPCA Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre** on Vancouver Island. When Wild ARC staff arrived, they saw that the poor guy was very scared, with deep wounds all over his body.

The raccoon had emergency surgery to close his wounds. Wild ARC staff then gave him the medical attention he needed to heal. Afterwards, he was moved into an outdoor enclosure, where staff could watch over and care for him until he fully recovered.

On the day of his release, a Wild ARC staff member put the raccoon in a kennel and took him to an area near where rescuers first found him. As soon as the staff member opened the kennel door, the raccoon wasted no time. He jumped out of the kennel, and ran into the wild where he belongs!



Left: raccoon injured and hooked up to an IV while being heavily sedated. Above: recovering in an enclosure at Wild ARC!

BUILD A CAVY CONDO!



Even though they're sold as "ideal habitats" for guinea pigs, most pet store cages are simply too small. Guinea pigs, also called cavy, are much happier and healthier in large habitats with lots of room to move.

You can easily make a large habitat from wire storage cubes and a sheet of corrugated plastic – a **C** (cubes) & **C** (corrugated plastic) cage! A C & C cage costs about the same as a pet store cage, but gives your guinea pigs at least **twice the space**.

Homemade cage
Size: 28 x 70 inches
(13.6 square feet)
Cost: \$65

Pet store cage
Size: 18 x 30 inches
(3.8 square feet)
Cost: \$77 →



How to make a C & C cage

Supplies:

- Sheet of corrugated plastic (48 x 96 inches)
- Pack of wire storage cubes (with at least 16 wire squares)
- Marker (dry erase works best)
- Yardstick or carpenter's square
- Box cutter
- Tape measure
- Packing tape
- Zip ties (optional)



1.



2.

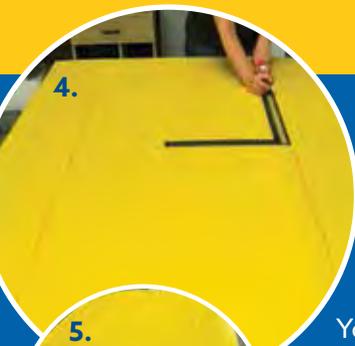


3.

Directions:

- 1.** Connect the wire squares to make a rectangle. This will be the outside of the cage. You can use zip ties or the plastic connectors that come with the wire squares. With zip ties, trim the "tails" after you tighten them.
- 2.** Place the wire rectangle on top of the plastic sheet and centre it. This will become the bottom and sides of the cage.
- 3.** With a marker, make dots on the plastic all around the inside of the wire rectangle to trace where it's sitting.





4. Using a straight edge like a yardstick or carpenter's square, connect the dots with a marker. You'll end up with a rectangle shape drawn in the centre of the plastic.



7. Flip the plastic sheet over and fold up the sides to form a box. The plastic should bend easily where you've scored it. Tape down the flaps you made in each corner with packing tape.



5. Extend the lines of the rectangle to the edges of the plastic sheet with a marker. You'll end up with a square shape drawn in each corner of the plastic.

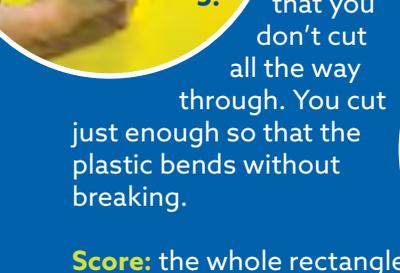


8. Place the box in the centre of the wire rectangle and voilà – instant guinea pig habitat!



6. With an adult's help, use a box cutter to cut and score the plastic sheet. "Scoring" the plastic means that you don't cut all the way through. You cut just enough so that the plastic bends without breaking.

Now comes the best part: decorating your cage! Fill the cage with fleece bedding, recycled paper bedding or aspen wood shavings. Hang your water bottle. Add your food dishes, plenty of hideouts, a litter tray with a hay pile and some chew toys. Sit back and watch your guinea pigs explore their new digs!



Score: the whole rectangle in the middle and one side of each corner square



Cut: the other side of each corner square



PUZZLING

CAT

BEHAVIOURS

Do you ever feel puzzled by your cat's behaviour? Observing a cat's body language and studying her face are great ways to gain clues about how your cat is feeling. But sometimes, she can really stump you with her "weird" behaviour!

Why do cats like boxes so much?

According to researchers, cats enjoy boxes because they offer protection and shelter from things that frighten them. Scientists have found that stress levels decrease significantly in cats who are able to relax in boxes. So to help your cat feel safe, let her play in a spare one, or provide plenty of other places for her to hide.



Why does my cat randomly attack me when I'm petting her?

Many cats don't like to be petted along their backs or especially their stomachs – at least not for long. Petting can overstimulate the receptors where fur

meets cat and irritate your cat's skin.

This can cause your cat to suddenly bite or scratch your hand. If your cat does this, stick to petting her around her head and under her chin. Also, keep petting sessions short.



Why is my cat burying her poop?

Scientists are actually not quite sure! But they think it is probably for hygiene and communication reasons.

Cats don't always bury their poop, but when they do, they are generally close to home. So they are likely trying to keep their area clean. When cats are farther from home, they often leave their poop unburied. Scientists think this could be a way to let other cats know this is their territory.



When a dog is wagging his tail, he's usually happy. So it's the same when my cat twitches her tail, right?

Actually, a swishing cat tail is generally a sign that a cat is getting agitated. A friendly cat will carry her tail stiff and high, so it's best to leave a kitty alone when she twitches her tail.



My cat keeps rubbing his cheeks on things. What does this mean?

Cats have scent glands located in their lips and chin. So when they rub up against objects (including you!), they are claiming the items by marking them with their scent.



Why does my cat's mouth hang open after she sniffs stuff?

Your cat is displaying something called the Flehmen response. Basically, it's a cross between smelling and tasting. When she makes this expression, she's collecting scent molecules, which pass through the roof of her mouth into a special organ called the vomeronasal (vom-er-oh-nay-zal) organ. This organ gathers more information about the scent and sends it off to the brain to be analyzed.



Gross! My cat threw up a hairball. Is he sick?

When your cat grooms, his rough tongue catches loose hair, which he swallows. Most of this hair passes through his digestive system without a problem. But some of it stays behind in his stomach and may form a hairball. To get rid of this fur, your cat will vomit it up. Although this sounds gross, it's perfectly normal cat behaviour, especially in long-haired cats! (If it is happening more than once or twice a month, take him to the vet just to make sure nothing's wrong.)

My cat likes to climb up high. Is she trying to get away from me?

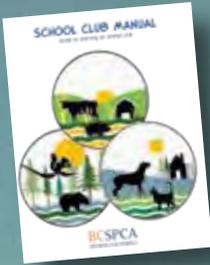
Don't worry – it's not you! Cats like to get up high and perch to feel safe. They feel more comfortable when they are viewing their surroundings from above. Cats love to perch on shelves, window ledges and other resting places.

Is there a reason my cat is always scratching up the couch?

It is a natural behaviour for cats to scratch. They scratch to help shed the outer covering on their claws, to scent mark and to stretch. If your cat is scratching your furniture, put a scratch post in front of the area. This will redirect her scratching to the post. Once she is regularly using the post, you can begin inching it to a location off to the side.



Start a school club!



Animals can't tell people when they are sad, hurt or scared. They need people to be their voice. If you love animals and want to help be their voice, why not gather some friends together and start a school animal club? The more people speak up for animals, the better the chance that people will hear their message.

Not sure where to start? Check out spca.bc.ca/schoolclubs for more information,

inspiration and advice. Plus, we are pleased to announce that we have a brand new **School Club Action Guide** coming out SOON! Inside, you'll find out tons of cool new ways to help animals, as well as how to earn **BC SPCA REWARDS** for your hard work.

To be the first to know when the guide is available, subscribe to our e-Kids Mews!letter at spca.bc.ca/e-Kids.



Love animals? Join the club!

If you're not already a BC SPCA Kids Club member, what are you waiting for? With 7,000 members and growing, the Kids Club unites kids like YOU who LOVE ANIMALS. You'll get *Bark!* magazine delivered to your door four times a year, plus other awesome membership perks.

Love animals? Join the BC SPCA Kids Club today! Fill out this form and mail it to:

BC SPCA Kids Club 1245 East 7th Avenue Vancouver, BC V5T 1R1

Name: _____ Telephone: _____ Birth Date: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

School: _____ Email: _____

- Yes, you can email me e-Kids Mews!letter and other BC SPCA Kids Club updates
 Savings! Two-year membership (\$25) One-year membership (\$15) Cheque payable to BC SPCA

Or by credit card Amex Visa Mastercard Signature: _____

Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Parent or Guardian's Name: _____

High Paws to you for printing neatly!



Sign up online at spca.bc.ca/kidsclub.

BCSPCA

Whose noses were in the books to bring you this issue:



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