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Created November 23, 2017

Information for CVBC Registrant Veterinarians

Duty to Report and Canine Tail Docking

In 2016, CVBC Registrants voted to ban the practice of canine tail docking by BC veterinarians. Since the ban went into effect, the BC SPCA has received many questions from veterinarians on when the Duty to Report would apply in cases of tail docking by a layperson (i.e. breeder).

On the matter of canine tail docking, the Duty to Report would only be engaged if a person presents a puppy with a docked tail who is currently in distress under the PCA Act (i.e. directly from the tail docking procedure or from complications thereof). Because veterinarians have elected to ban tail docking by veterinarians, the BC SPCA believes the procedure done by a layperson at the traditional age of 2-5 days of age is no longer considered a “generally accepted practice of animal management,” eliminating the exemption under the PCA Act for owners causing distress to their own animals. However, the animal would need to be in distress *at present* to engage the Duty to Report.

It would not be engaged in the event that a person presents a puppy with a healed docked tail, or if a person expresses intent to go elsewhere (out of province) and have the tail docked. Additionally, if a breeder expresses the intent to dock tails in the future, this would not engage the Duty to Report because the PCAA does not address expected future distress.

While veterinarians are not *obligated* to report the above to the BC SPCA, they certainly can make a report in any case where they believe an animal is in distress. The BC SPCA believes that tail docking is also illegal under the Criminal Code of Canada. We expect that additional case law will clarify these issues in the coming years.