



**BRITISH COLUMBIA  
SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

**POSITION STATEMENT**

**RESPONSIBLE COMPANION ANIMAL SOURCING**

The BC SPCA supports the responsible sourcing of companion animals to discourage poor welfare issues that can occur through animal sales that are primarily motivated by profit. The Society therefore advocates that individuals wishing to acquire a companion animal first consider adopting from a shelter, a pet store that follows an adoption model, or other similar source of homeless animals.

**SALES OF COMPANION ANIMALS FROM PET STORES**

The BC SPCA is opposed to the breeding, transport, confinement and sale of companion animals where their welfare and socialization are likely to be compromised. The Society encourages pet stores to implement an adoption model that allows homeless companion animals to experience the Five Freedoms at all stages of rehoming.

**DISTANCE SALES OF COMPANION ANIMALS**

The BC SPCA does not support the acquisition of companion animals through the exclusive use of the internet, by mail-order or over the telephone unless the person or organization selling the animal can provide adequate assurance of good welfare. In particular, the BC SPCA is opposed to any breeding, transport, confinement or sale of animals that is likely to cause distress or suffering. The Society encourages prospective purchasers to consider adoption and, if adoption is not an option, to acquire pets directly from the place they were born. This minimizes stress to the animal and allows the prospective guardian to see the condition and behaviour of other animals, how the animal has been kept, and to learn about the specific needs of the species or breed being acquired.

**COMPANION ANIMAL REGULATIONS**

The BC SPCA supports the implementation of preventative government guidelines on the breeding, transport, housing and sale of companion animals. Preventative strategies, particularly those incorporating mandatory inspection, play an important role in protecting companion animal welfare. The BC SPCA encourages all levels of government to consider strategies that make sense for their greater community, including breeder and pet store

inspections and licensing, mandatory identification of cats and dogs, commercial pet sales bans, and import and transport restrictions.

***Approved by the Board of Directors – July 2014***

## **BACKGROUND**

The BC SPCA investigates cruelty related to the breeding, transport, housing and sale of companion animals on a reactive basis. Instances of suffering related to the commercial breeding and sale of companion animals often go unreported and are consequently not investigated.

Existing scientific evidence demonstrates that where companion animals are bred primarily for profit, they experience poor welfare due to their genetic background, the environment they are housed and transported in, and the type and amount of socialization they receive. Companion animals can also suffer due to the lack of knowledge about their needs, including lack of access to prompt veterinary care.

***Background updated – July 2014***

See also:

Companion Animal Welfare

Selective Breeding of Companion Animals

Transporting Live Animals

Exotic Companion Animals

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Adoption model:** The use of a pet store, pet supply store or other appropriate retail setting to house and adopt homeless animals in partnership with an animal sheltering or rescue organization. In an adoption model, adopters are interviewed and matched with the best candidate. Adoption representatives inquire about the adopter's history with animals and ensure that the adopter has the knowledge and living conditions to be able to provide for the animal's Five Freedoms. Under this adoption model, the retail setting provides for the housing and welfare needs of the animals. In addition, all animals receive appropriate veterinary care, and all dogs, cats and rabbits are spayed or neutered prior to sale. Furthermore, provision is made to enable the adopter to return the animal in the event the adoption proves unsuccessful.

**Companion animals:** Domesticated animals who have been selectively bred to live and thrive in mutually beneficial relationships with humans and who are kept primarily for the purpose of companionship.

**Distress:** A severe negative affective state caused by physical and/or psychological factors. Physical distress may arise when an animal is hungry, thirsty, too hot, too cold, diseased, injured or in pain to an elevated degree. Psychological distress may arise when an animal experiences fear, anxiety, frustration, depression or anger to an elevated degree.

**Five Freedoms:** A concept first developed in 1965 by The Brambell Committee, formed by the UK government to examine the conditions on commercial farms. Now internationally recognized, the Five Freedoms are considered applicable to all animals.

The BC SPCA's Five Freedoms (adapted from the original list) are:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst;
2. Freedom from pain, injury and disease;
3. Freedom from distress;
4. Freedom from discomfort;
5. Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being.

The BC SPCA's Five Freedoms form the basis of the Society's Charter and describe conditions that must be fulfilled in order to prevent the *suffering* of all animals in human care. The Society acknowledges that these freedoms are not enforceable and that absolute provision of these freedoms may not be possible, but strongly encourages all animal *guardians* to strive to provide them.

**Suffering:** An enduring negative affective state. Suffering is associated with feelings such as pain, hunger, fear and anxiety. All sentient beings are capable of suffering.