

Veterinarians play an important role in animal protection.

You expect your veterinarian to make recommendations about health care for your pets or livestock. As experts in animal health and wellbeing, it is their role to educate the public about animal welfare standards and to provide guidance and resources.

When veterinarians see signs of animal mistreatment, it is their job to provide guidance about proper care. Hopefully, the pet parent/animal owner follows the advice of the veterinarian and makes the advised changes to improve the care of the animal(s).

Unfortunately, sometimes a problem with abuse or neglect continues even after an owner has been advised about the proper care their animal needs and has had ample time and opportunity to put the recommended changes in place. For the sake of the health or safety of the animal, the veterinarian may then find it necessary to notify the applicable animal protection agency and have them step in.

Veterinarians have an ethical duty to act.

For veterinarians, the duty to report animal cruelty overrides any confidentiality usually provided to a client when there is reason to believe that an animal is suffering from extreme or ongoing abuse or neglect. Veterinary professionals know that failure to report an abuse or neglect problem to the applicable animal protection agency can contribute to the continued abuse or even the death of an animal.

Anyone who suspects animal abuse can report it.

In Saskatchewan, provincial law protects people who report animal cruelty in good faith. Anyone having reasonable suspicion that an animal's physical welfare is being endangered by abuse or neglect can report it to the animal welfare enforcement agency in their area, who will investigate further.

ANIMAL PROTECTION AGENCIES IN SASKATCHEWAN

In the following urban areas:

Moose Jaw Humane Society

www.mjhs.ca

306-692-1517

Prince Albert SPCA

www.princealbertspca.ca

306-763-6110

Regina Humane Society

www.reginahumanesociety.ca

306-543-6363

Saskatoon SPCA

www.saskatoonspca.com

306-374-7387

In all other parts of the province, and for all livestock complaints, contact:

Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan (APSS)

www.animalprotectionservices.ca

Direct 306-382-0002

Toll free 844-382-0002

Animal Protection and Your Saskatchewan Veterinarian



What constitutes animal abuse or neglect?

- Non-accidental injury
- Failure to provide proper food or fresh water
- Failure to provide adequate shelter, sufficient space or appropriate sanitation
- Failure to provide appropriate medical treatment when necessary
- Extremely matted coat, overgrown claws or hooves or other grooming problems which cause pain

An owner does not have to intend to cause distress for an animal to meet the criteria for distress. If you have any of the following concerns, talk to your veterinarian. They can provide information and guidance.

Excessive force

There is a limit to the reasonable amount of force or correction that can be used in the name of animal training; at some point, "correction" becomes a beating inflicting unnecessary pain, and thus abuse. Animals must be handled respectfully and only with force appropriate to their size and species.

Inappropriate confinement

Animals are routinely confined for safety, transportation, etc, and this is not an offence if it is done in an appropriate manner. However, extended confinement of pets in small cages that are designed for temporary holding causes them distress. For confined livestock, approved stocking densities or cage sizes must be maintained in order to comply with the appropriate Code of Practice.

Lack of water

All animals have a requirement for water, and they must be provided with water of sufficient quantity and quality to meet their needs. Water access can be particularly challenging during Saskatchewan's long, cold winters. Owners MUST take appropriate steps to ensure that all animals have sufficient water to meet their needs, regardless of the weather conditions.

Emaciated condition

Extreme hunger due to lack of feed is never acceptable. Emaciation can of course be a sign of underfeeding, but did you know emaciation can also result from several medical conditions? If that is the case, diagnosing the medical problem will help your animal get appropriate treatment and relieve the emaciation.

Obesity

Obesity is as bad for animal health as it is for human health. Of course, extreme hunger due to lack of feed is never acceptable, but another increasingly common problem for pets is obesity. Overfeeding dramatically increases the risk for developing medical conditions like Diabetes. Fortunately, nutrition is completely under the control of the animal owner, and following portion guidelines, which are readily available for all species, will help. Obesity will not result in a call to an animal protection agency, but pet owners should keep in mind that obesity can be so unhealthy that it is included here as a form of neglect.

Untreated injuries

Accidents happen, and any person or animal can experience pain and distress as a result. However, allowing an injured animal to remain in distress by withholding treatment for injuries is definitely animal cruelty. Sometimes people think animals will get better on their own or they simply underestimate the pain that the animal is experiencing. A broken leg may heal eventually, but the animal will have suffered considerably in the meantime. Work with your veterinarian to find a solution.

Untreated illness or infection

Like an untreated injury, an untreated illness can mean that an animal has remained in distress. Owners must provide their animals with appropriate care for all illnesses, generally in consultation with a veterinarian. In situations where there isn't a reasonable likelihood of recovery, or treatment fails and there is no way to relieve the animal of its suffering, the owner should consider having the animal humanely euthanized. It may be the most compassionate option.

Inadequate shelter

While "adequate" can be difficult to define, and will vary somewhat between species and even type of animal (adequate shelter for a Malamute and a Chihuahua will be different), it is important that pets have appropriate shelter from the elements and from squalor. Livestock must have access to wind breaks and dry areas.

Abandonment

Animals must be provided with appropriate care at all times, which includes adequate supervision. Leaving pets or livestock to fend for themselves after a move, or for extended periods while on holiday, is never appropriate. Owners must make arrangements to take their animals with them where applicable or arrange a caretaker.

Lack of necessary grooming care

Lack of appropriate grooming can lead to distress in many species, not just dogs and cats. Matted hair causes pain and discomfort, and is therefore considered distress. Allowing dogs to become extremely matted is considered cruelty, and it is the owner's responsibility to provide suitable grooming for their animals in order to prevent unnecessary pain.

Horse hooves must be trimmed and/or shod as often as is necessary to maintain hooves in functional condition. Whether shod or unshod, hooves must not be allowed to grow to excessive lengths. If horse hooves are allowed to grow, they can become so long that they curl up or otherwise impede walking. This is not acceptable as it causes unnecessary pain and discomfort. Owners are responsible for keeping the hooves of all horses, or other hooved animals, in reasonable condition. A Farrier is a professional who trims, shoes and cares for hooves. Talk to your veterinarian for more information.

We know you care about your animals. There is a lot to know about animal health and care. Abuse and neglect are preventable. Ask for information anytime. Your veterinarian is there to help.