



SUSPECT **ANIMAL ABUSE OR NEGLECT?** **VETERINARIANS HAVE AN** **ETHICAL DUTY TO ACT**

SVMA ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE

Clients expect vets to make recommendations about animal care. It is appropriate that members of the veterinary profession provide guidance and resources and educate them about animal welfare standards to support their clients as they strive to do the best for their animals. Often potential issues can be prevented if clients are made aware and provided support.

If potential animal abuse or neglect issues do not resolve after you have taken measures to educate the owner, it may be time to notify the applicable animal protection agency.

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When there is reason to believe that an animal is being abused or neglected, veterinarians have a duty to report their concerns that overrides our professional confidentiality code. Failure to report or reluctance to share appropriate information can contribute to the continued abuse or even death of animals. Saskatchewan law provides immunity from prosecution to veterinarians who report suspicion of abuse in good faith.

WHAT CONSTITUTES ANIMAL ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

- Non-accidental injury
- Failure to provide proper food and fresh water
- Failure to provide adequate shelter, sufficient space, or appropriate sanitation
- Failure to provide appropriate medical treatment
- Sexual exploitation

RED FLAGS

- History of high turnover in pets
- Multiple old, unexplained injuries or scars
- The animal is fearful, flinches or is afraid of the owner
- Repetitive injuries to one animal or to multiple animals over time
- Emaciated body condition with no medical cause
- Extremely poor grooming or sanitation that compromises the animal's health

COMPASSION AND EDUCATION

- People rarely put their animals at risk intentionally. Communication and

compassion go a long way. Follow up calls can help as well. If this does not address your concerns. Take action

RECORD AND DOCUMENT

- Fully document your findings. Take photos if possible.
- Take down any statements made about what happened and the care or lack of care provided.
- Ask questions to draw out information.
- Pay attention to the condition of the human in your office as well as the animal.
- Even if you are unable to document all of your observations, it is important that you record what you can in case you need to report the suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE ABLE TO PROVE YOUR SUSPICIONS IN ORDER TO REPORT

Anyone with a reasonable suspicion that an animal's physical welfare is impacted by abuse or neglect can report it to Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan,

their local enforcement office or the local police. The report will be followed up. A report is the first step to making sure that people and animals that are in need will get the help they need.

WHO TO NOTIFY:

In the following urban areas, the animal welfare enforcement agencies are:

Moose Jaw Humane Society
www.mjhs.ca
306-692-1517

Prince Albert SPCA
princealbertspca.ca
306-763-6110

Regina Humane Society
reginahumanesociety.ca
306-543-6363

Saskatoon SPCA
www.saskatoonspca.com
306-374-7387

In all other areas of the province, contact:

Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan
www.animalprotectionservices.ca/
report-animal-abuse/
Call direct (306) 382-0002
or toll free (844) 382-0002

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After a report is made, an animal protection officer (APO) will:

- Assess to determine the

appropriate response to the concern. Because there are often human welfare issues where there are animal welfare issues, information about suspected abuses is sometimes shared between human and animal welfare agencies to ensure that help is provided where needed.

- APO will make requirements for proper animal care and corrective actions. Owners will be given a chance and time to fix deficits. Acute injuries must be dealt with immediately.
- The situation will be assessed again at one or multiple future times.
- If an APO determines that animal neglect or abuse problems persist, they may have a veterinarian attend the premise or may bring the animal to the veterinary clinic for confirmation of evidence of continuing neglect or abuse. The APO determines the next course of action. If seizure is indicated, the APO is the one who seizes the animal. 🐾