

What is (and isn't) Animal Cruelty?

Every year, we receive thousands of phone calls from concerned citizens about pets or livestock that appear to be abused or neglected.

The Saskatchewan SPCA is empowered under the provincial *Animal Protection Act* to investigate and resolve reports of animal cruelty. *The Animal Protection Act* states that:

- (1) *No person shall cause an animal to be in distress.*
- (2) *No person responsible for an animal shall cause or permit the animal to be or to continue to be in distress.*

The Act states that an animal is in distress if it is deprived of adequate food, water, care or shelter; injured, sick, in pain or suffering; or abused or neglected.

Examples of animal cruelty include:

- ◆ an animal that is severely emaciated or dehydrated (indicating that the animal has been deprived of adequate food or water).
- ◆ injuries that have been deliberately inflicted. This includes home castration and home ear cropping, along with any other practices that are not approved husbandry practices for that species.
- ◆ any wounds or medical conditions that have not been treated adequately.
- ◆ poor grooming, which in extreme cases can cause a number of serious secondary health and dental problems.
- ◆ medical problems that have been caused by environmental conditions or inadequate shelter.

According to current animal protection legislation, the following would **not** generally be considered to be examples of animal cruelty:

- ◆ chaining dogs – unless the chain is injuring the dog, or the chain is too short to allow the dog any exercise.
- ◆ leaving a dog alone all day or not properly socializing a dog – unless the situation is severe enough to cause harm to the dog.
- ◆ practices such as branding, dehorning and castration of livestock, when performed according to current accepted methods.

APOs are trained to recognize signs of animal cruelty and take the appropriate steps to relieve the distress of the animal. However, common sense is essential to determine the appropriate response to each situation. Generally we would attempt to work with the owner/caregiver to improve the care of the animal. If improvements are not made in a timely manner, charges can be laid under *The Animal Protection Act* and/or the *Criminal Code*.