
THE HUMANITARIAN

SASKATCHEWAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS



In this issue:

Saskatchewan SPCA Conference Recap

Muddy Buddy

Animal Hoarding in Depth

Ministry of Agriculture Meeting



**SASKATCHEWAN
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COLLABORATION KEY TO ANIMAL WELFARE

In October, the Ministry of Agriculture hosted a one-day meeting for members of the Saskatchewan animal welfare community.

A variety of speakers provided updates on a wide range of topics relating to animal welfare. Dr. Betty Althouse from the Ministry discussed the work of the Interagency Human and Animal Welfare Task Team. Other topics addressed during the day included the new training requirements for animal protection officers and the development of a pet care service industry code of practice. As well, attendees learned about the Canadian Pork Excellence program that addresses on-farm traceability, food safety, and animal care.

Members of the Saskatchewan Animal Rescue Certification Program Working Group provided an update on the status of this voluntary program. (See related article.)

The meeting also provided a valuable opportunity to discuss ways for all stakeholders to work together to address animal welfare issues.

SASKATCHEWAN ANIMAL RESCUE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Saskatchewan Animal Rescue Certification (SARC) Program seeks to raise the standard of care in animal rescues by providing education, training, and mentorship opportunities for animal rescues and shelters. SARC is a voluntary certification program that supports improved cooperation and communication between rescues, fosters, and shelters.

A Working Group established by the Saskatchewan SPCA is developing this program. Other current members of the Working Group include individuals from the following organizations:

- Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan
- Battlefords Humane Society
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association
- Saskatchewan Association of Veterinary Technologists
- SCAT Street Cat Rescue

Organizations wanting to be certified under this program will have to demonstrate they meet the standards outlined in the "Saskatchewan Animal Rescue Standards." These standards were developed as a practical reference for any rescue or shelter caring for homeless pets. They are adapted from guidelines and checklists developed by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

The Working Group has solicited feedback on the proposed Saskatchewan Standards document during regional meetings that were held over the past year. The regional meetings were attended by individuals from veterinary clinics, rescue groups, animal shelters, and other organizations with an interest in animal welfare.

At their September 5th meeting, the Working Group reviewed all comments and suggestions received to-date on the proposed Standards. The Standards document is now being revised to reflect this feedback.

A new SARC program website is also under development. The website will deliver credible, current information for animal rescues as well as members of the public who are considering pet adoption.

Next steps for the Working Group include gathering feedback from the public on the proposed SARC program.

Our thanks to the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada for their assistance.



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A REVIEW OF THE 2019 SASKATCHEWAN SPCA CONFERENCE

By Laura Zmud, Social Work Intern

My name is Laura Zmud and I am lucky enough to be the Social Work Intern at the Saskatchewan SPCA this fall. I am in my final year of school and will complete my Bachelor of Social Work degree in April 2020. I'm interested in the ways that animal welfare and human health and welfare are connected, and I hope my future work will focus on this connection.

Being placed at the Saskatchewan SPCA for my internship has been extremely beneficial. I've explored many of the programs the Saskatchewan SPCA offers, focusing on "The Link" between interpersonal violence and animal abuse.

As the Social Work Intern, I was able to attend the Saskatchewan SPCA's annual conference that was held on September 24th in Saskatoon. The theme for this year was Making Connections: The Human-Animal Bond. An understanding of this bond was strengthened and solidified throughout the day by all who attended from the animal welfare and human services sectors. Seven different presentations offered new and unique perspectives on the human-animal bond in both personal and professional settings.



Conference attendees learned about the impact that animals have on the residents at Sherbrooke Community Centre.

The day was kicked off by Dr. Colleen Dell and Dr. Darlene Chalmers discussing the work they do with their therapy dogs in the PAWSitive

Follow the work of Dr. Dell and her therapy dogs on the Facebook page: "Anna-Belle & Subie's Adventures"

Support program at Drumheller Institution in Alberta. The program utilizes the human-animal bond to aid in healing from addictions and creating connection in a prison environment.

Food throughout the day was delicious, and after lunch we had a visit from Loki who is a working Saskatoon Police Service K-9 Unit dog, and his partner Cst. Kai Noesgaard. The training and time commitment needed from both partners to create a successful and professional dog-human partnership is quite remarkable to see.

The most impactful speaker of the day was a presentation by Stephanie Anderson on the work that she does through her photography company. Stephanie offers requiem photography sessions, giving owners an opportunity to honour and remember four-legged family members before they pass away. There were many tears and laughs as this presentation reminded us of the vital role and connection our pets play in our lives. What Stephanie offers is a timeless and lasting reminder of the special bond between pets and families. I'm so glad I was able to take in her presentation.

These were only a few of the many great presentations from the day. Others included pet safekeeping programs, the role of pets at

Sherbrooke Community Centre, a certification program for shelters and rescues, and the Saskatchewan SPCA's Warming Hearts & Paws campaign.

Preparation for next year's conference has already begun, with a focus on emergency planning. The date is September 22, 2020 and I already have it in my calendar!

Thank you to our conference sponsors and supporters:

PETSMART
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of Canada



Our special conference supporter:
Ernie Olfert



Cst. Kai Noesgaard and PSD Loki from the Saskatoon Police Service.



Stephanie Anderson presented on requiem photography sessions.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INTERVENTION CRITICAL FOR ANIMAL HOARDING CASES

By Rigel Smith

There are potentially two million hoarders in Canada, and while scientists have gained a better understanding of people who excessively collect objects, research and awareness of animal hoarding is still limited.

A workshop in Regina, Sask., which took place in June 2019, helped to address that lack of knowledge in society. The day-long event brought together professionals from both human service and animal welfare disciplines to focus on animal hoarding – a disorder that exhibits much differently than object hoarding.

Object hoarding is caused by a hoarding disorder that impels people to collect too many objects and makes it difficult for them to discard items. With cases of animal hoarding, people collect an excessive number of animals — to the point where they can no longer provide adequate care.

“[For] the Saskatchewan SPCA ... one of our priorities is education and working collaboratively,” says Frances Wach, executive director of the Saskatchewan SPCA and one of the workshop’s organizers. “In terms of working on hoarding, if we work collaboratively, we can meet the needs of both people and animals.”

The workshop was organized by a planning committee with representatives from the Saskatchewan SPCA, the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association (SVMA), Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan (APSS), Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), Community Safety and Well-being, and the province’s Ministry of Agriculture.

The workshop is the first step towards better collaboration between human and animal health sectors. There is a knowledge gap present between the two sectors that needs to be addressed to ensure people and animals in animal hoarding situations receive adequate care.

“I think the committee itself is a good example of a collaborative and collective approach to getting the workshop done,” says Wach.

The event attracted about 60 attendees from various backgrounds including social work, animal protection services and animal shelters, fire and police, public health, veterinary medicine, and mental health and addictions.

The day featured keynote presentations, a session highlighting Saskatchewan agencies that work to identify and help people with elevated risk levels, a case-study panel discussion, and a forum for feedback and recommendations.

One of the workshop’s keynote speakers was Dr. Colleen Marion (WCVM '99), a Manitoba veterinarian who has served on several animal welfare committees at provincial and national levels.

“The thing I advocate for the most is the inclusion of animal health and animal protection people at the same tables as the human health and the human protection people.”

-- Erin Wasson, Veterinary Social Worker

The other keynote speaker was Christiana Bratiotis, an associate professor in the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia, who believes animal hoarding is an issue that demands a multi-disciplinary approach.

“No one discipline or [one] person working within that discipline has all of the expertise needed,” says Bratiotis. “It’s really going to take the animal community and the psychiatric community coming together to accomplish this.”

Bratiotis says events like the workshop help foster advancements in the field.

“Where there’s conversation, then there’s understanding, and out of that grows [the] will to make changes.”

Erin Wasson, veterinary social worker at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM), says members of the college’s team are working with representatives from other organizations to address animal hoarding situations.

Continues on Page 5

“We are bringing veterinary social work and veterinarians into the homes of individuals struggling with animal hoarding and using our unique collaboration to partner with animal protection agencies to address a dangerous and serious gap in human and animal health services,” says Wasson.

She adds that without on-the-ground mental health services, very few individuals involved in these cases would receive the care they desperately need.

It’s also important for veterinarians — and everyone else involved — to understand the distinct roles that people play in these cases.

“The WCVM [has many vets] that have all been called out onto calls where there’s an animal health concern,” says Wasson. “But the human health concern is what is driving the animal health concern.”

There is still a long road ahead when it comes to engaging both human and animal health services in this issue. Wasson says oftentimes, mental health professionals don’t have the tools necessary to enter animal hoarding situations and to provide proper care. This can leave service providers at-risk if they’re not properly vaccinated or clad in personal protective equipment.

Additionally, without knowledge of best practice assessment tools, it can be a challenge to appropriately gauge the level of risk to individuals living in circumstances that are often a combination of object and animal hoarding.

Wasson’s primary goal is the inclusion of all sectors and educating everyone on how to properly address the issue. In Saskatchewan, she points out that only a handful of people have the necessary background and experience to intervene in animal hoarding situations.

“For a long time, the human health and animal health people did not get together to talk about much,” says Wasson. “The thing I advocate for the most is the inclusion of animal health and animal protection people at the same tables as the human health and the human protection people.”

One of those human health workers is Doug Harder, manager of emergency and transitional services with the Saskatchewan Health Authority’s Mental Health and Addictions Services in Saskatoon. Harder got involved in the event because of his connection to Wasson and his collaboration with her around the veterinary social work program and exposure to the cases she was seeing.

“It’s pretty obvious that mental health has a key piece in this area,” says Harder. “[This workshop] gives us a deeper understanding of the attachment issues that these individuals have with their animals.”

Harder says it’s important to understand all aspects of an animal hoarding situation and events like the workshop help to achieve that goal.

“If I’m not educated in what I’m walking into, I’m not going to understand what I’m doing,” says Harder. “We just really need to have a high level of understanding – it leads to better intervention and better patient care.”

Harder believes multi-disciplinary workshops like this should continue.

“I don’t think we realize how prominent [animal hoarding] is. We really haven’t conceptualized what hoarding is about, so exposure in this kind of workshop exposes us to the pathology as well as the challenges that the other agencies have.”

For Wasson, seeing how a simple conversation evolved into a day-long workshop was encouraging.

“This started out as just myself and the former executive director of Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan talking about a case,” she says. “And it’s blossomed into multiple agencies sitting on a panel and going through a case example together. That’s incredible.”

Harder agrees.

“This type of workshop really empowers some of us to really just keep working away at this ... this gives you hope.”

Originally published in WCVM Today, October 2019



LEARNING ABOUT ANIMAL HOARDING: RESEARCH

By Autumn Tuttroen

In a previous edition of *The Humanitarian*, we discussed three broad categories of animal hoarders: the overwhelmed caregiver, the rescue hoarder, and the exploiter hoarder. In this part we will explore what academic research has uncovered about people who hoard animals.

Active vs. passive hoarding

It is not uncommon to wonder how people who hoard animals acquire so many. Generally speaking, there are two ways that people can accumulate anything: actively or passively.

According to Saldarriaga-Cantillo & Nieto (2016), active animal hoarding may involve situations where people seek out animals they believe have been abandoned and left on the streets. Active animal hoarding can also involve claims to be an animal shelter or rescue organization or responding to ads of owners looking to adopt out their companion animal.

However, not all animal hoarders engage in active behaviour, as some may have acquired the animals passively. Passive hoarding can happen when the community believes that they are helping an animal by bringing it to a person who is known for rescuing animals. The community may or may not be aware of the number of animals already in the home or the living conditions of the passive hoarder. Passive hoarding may arise where there is simply a lack of reproductive control. An individual may start out with a few unaltered animals, but their numbers can dramatically increase and soon a passive hoarder can become overwhelmed with the sheer volume of animals.

Repeat animal hoarding offences

In addition to learning how people acquire animals, researchers have also put forth some ideas about why animal hoarding recidivism rates are so high. (Recidivism refers to the tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behaviour.)

According to the Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium (HARC) and other researchers in the field, recidivism rates are estimated to be between 50% to 90%. This means that even after a large animal seizure has taken place, the chances of that person either actively or passively gaining animals after the fact are relatively high.

One particular theory for recidivism is related to a lack of mental health support and/or the underlying cause(s) of animal hoarding not being dealt with. Without support or assistance, the cycle of acquiring animals, having them seized, and then acquiring animals again, will continue unless some form of additional intervention is made available.

The field of animal hoarding research in academia is ongoing and showing no signs of slowing down. Researchers are interested in learning more about animal hoarding itself and also about the individuals who hoard animals.

For concerns about dogs, cats or other companion animals in these cities:

IN REGINA:
Regina Humane Society
306.543.6363

IN SASKATOON:
Saskatoon SPCA
306.374.7387

IN PRINCE ALBERT:
Prince Albert SPCA
306.763.6110

For all other concerns involving suspected cruelty to pets or livestock in Saskatchewan:

Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan
1.844.382.0002 | info@animalprotectionservices.ca

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The Saskatchewan SPCA operates thanks to the generous support of our members and donors. One of the many ways to make a donation to the Society is through our monthly donation option. Contact our office at 1-877-382-7722 to learn about your options for having regular monthly donations made to the Saskatchewan SPCA. All charitable donations of \$10 or more are eligible for a charitable tax receipt.

The Saskatchewan SPCA is working to:

- Help pet owners struggling with homelessness through our Warming Hearts & Paws Campaign
- Assist the human and the animal victims of violence
- Help retired police dogs through our Stryker K-9 Care Fund
- Raise awareness of animal welfare issues
- Advocate for improvements to animal welfare legislation
- Establish a voluntary, education-based certification program for animal rescues



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A MUDDY DAY IN AUGUST

The second-annual Muddy Buddy Family Fun Obstacle Run was held at Blackstrap Provincial Park on August 24th. Pets and their people converged on the park for a mud-filled day of fun and laughter in support of the Saskatchewan SPCA. A big thanks goes out to all sponsors, participants, and volunteers that showed their support for Saskatchewan's only pet-friendly mud run.

Planning is underway for the 2020 Muddy Buddy. Mark Saturday, August 22nd, 2020 on your calendar. You won't want to miss next year's event!

Thank you to our sponsors:

