

PROVINCIAL OFFICE

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December 5, 2022

Dear Board of Directors,

On behalf of the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA), I'd like to congratulate you on your recent election success. As **two-thirds of British Columbians are pet owners**, and many more are animal and wildlife lovers, your constituents are keen to know how you will work to create more humane communities.

As you may know, the BC SPCA has been committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in British Columbia for over 125 years. We operate **42 facilities and provide a range of important community services** across the province, including emergency response for pets displaced by natural disasters, compassionate pet boarding for victims of interpersonal violence, curriculum-based education programs for youth, pet food banks and low cost spay/neuter and other veterinary services. To learn more about what we accomplished last year, please see our [2021 Annual Report](#).

Are you also aware of the evidence-based advocacy, policy and legislative work done by BC SPCA animal welfare experts? Our teams have contributed to recent provincial changes in rodenticide use and mink farming, reforms to national standards for animals used in research and farm animals, and advancing bills to end cetacean captivity and animal fighting. At the local government level, we have helped dozens of local and First Nation governments adopt **humane animal bylaws**.

We greatly value local government's important role in animal welfare and have support and resources to help your Board adopt enhanced animal-related bylaws for your community. Our [new bylaw search tool](#) provides examples of **progressive, BC SPCA-recommended bylaws** from communities across B.C., and we are happy to answer bylaw questions from your Board and staff.

In anticipation of this year's local government election, we surveyed BC SPCA supporters and members of the public to determine their priorities for local government action on six key animal welfare issues that you can act on or influence. We heard loud and clear that advocating to the province for pet-friendly housing was their top priority: **out of the 13,865 unique survey responses that we received from B.C. residents, an incredible 9,921 people ranked increasing the availability and affordability of pet-friendly housing as a number one priority.**

The inability to find pet-friendly housing is the primary reason that adult animals are surrendered to the BC SPCA, and accounts for almost 25 per cent of cat and dog surrenders every year. Over the past eight

years, we have taken in **more than 11,000 animals whose families could not find pet-friendly housing** (and this doesn't include the animals surrendered to other organizations or rehomed privately)! This doesn't just affect the BC SPCA or the animals who are surrendered. Research has shown that **pets improve our mental, physical and psychological health** and that their unconditional love, comfort and friendship is a lifeline for many people – particularly the most vulnerable.

The pandemic and the current housing crisis have intensified the importance of pets as members of many families, and heightened the heartbreaking decisions that must be made when pet-friendly housing cannot be found. Through our outreach and compassionate boarding programs, we know that many people choose to stay in inappropriate housing, go without housing or stay in abusive situations in order to keep their pets with them.

The other animal welfare issues included in the survey also received strong public support province-wide and are key to making our communities and province a more humane place for all of us:

Animal Welfare Issue	# of Top Priority Responses*
Advocating to the province for more pet-friendly housing	9,921
Creating bylaws to keep exotic animals in the wild	4,421
Restricting private use of fireworks to protect people and animals	3,825
Providing safe, accessible public parks and trails for dogs	3,812
Reducing human/wildlife conflicts with wildlife feeding bylaws	3,737
Humanely controlling rodents by ending the use of all poisons on local government property	3,282

*Respondents could select more than one issue as a top priority

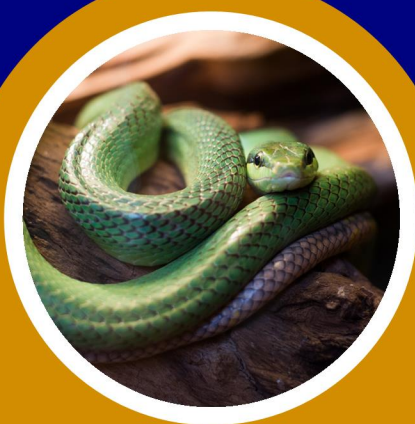
In light of this information, we hope you'll talk to your constituents about their priorities for animal welfare and take action to make your policies and bylaws more humane. To help you get started, I've included background information on the six key issues from our survey. In addition to this email and attachments, I have mailed you a package of our latest AnimalSense magazine and Science & Policy newsletter. You can also find more ways to take action for animals by [signing up for Action Alerts](#) on our website.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to schedule a presentation from a BC SPCA representative. We are eager to work with you to make your community and our province a safer, more caring place for animals and people.

Sincerely,



Sarah Herring
BC SPCA Government Relations Officer



YOU CAN HELP KEEP EXOTIC ANIMALS IN THE WILD

Exotic animals suffer when they're captured, kept, bred in captivity and sold as pets or entertainment. Removing them from the wild, and releasing them in B.C., damages sensitive ecosystems.

The BC SPCA's mission is to enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in British Columbia.

Have questions about how you can improve animal welfare in your community?

Contact us at:
1-855-622-7722
animalbylaws@spca.bc.ca



The BC SPCA respectfully acknowledges that we live, work and play on the unceded traditional territories of the numerous and diverse First Nations within British Columbia.

We express our gratitude to all Indigenous communities - First Nations, Métis and Inuit - for stewarding and sharing this land.

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SPEAKING FOR ANIMALS

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? WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE?

Exotic animals are wild animals; they haven't been domesticated over thousands of years like cats or dogs. Even generations of captive breeding does not remove their wild instincts and needs. They suffer in captivity and most people don't have the resources or knowledge to fully meet their physical, behavioural and psychological needs.

Removing exotic animals from their natural habitat damages fragile ecosystems and can threaten the survival of wild populations. When they're released in B.C., they can harm our ecosystem and threaten native wildlife. Exotic animals can also transfer serious diseases to humans or other animals, and injure their owners. Learn more about the problem with exotic pets [here](#).

The B.C. *Wildlife Act* only regulates the most dangerous exotic animals as Controlled Alien Species, leaving local governments to deal with other exotic species such as serval cats, kangaroos, ball pythons, parrots and turtles.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

You can personally choose not to keep exotic pets or support businesses that display or sell them, and educate others about the [exotic pet trade](#). As a local government, you can adopt bylaws that prohibit keeping, breeding, selling and displaying exotic animals and their hybrids.



WHO ELSE HAS TAKEN ACTION?

City of Courtenay:
Bylaw No. [1897](#)

City of Fort St. John:
Bylaw No. [2527](#)

Ahousaht First Nation:
Bylaw No. [2019-01](#)

Find more BC SPCA-recommended progressive bylaws [here](#).

YOU CAN PROTECT ANIMALS & PEOPLE FROM FIREWORKS

Fireworks might seem like harmless entertainment, but they can have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts on animals, people and the environment.



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? WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE?

Exploding fireworks can terrify pets, farm animals and wildlife. Frightened animals are more likely to panic, try to escape or act uncharacteristically. This may mean pets bolting through doors and into traffic, farm animals trampling through fences and breaking limbs, and wildlife flying into buildings or abandoning vulnerable young.

Fireworks can also injure and traumatize people, including those with sensory issues and PTSD, veterans, and survivors and witnesses of gun violence. Structure fires and wildfires can be sparked by fireworks, particularly in dry conditions. Toxic chemicals and debris from fireworks can contaminate air, water and soil, and the debris that's left behind can be eaten by wildlife or domestic animals.

Learn more about the dangers of fireworks [here](#).



WHAT CAN WE DO?

You can personally refrain from setting off fireworks and encourage your friends and neighbours to do the same. You can also keep your pets safe indoors on nights when fireworks are usually set off.

As a local government, you can adopt bylaws to prohibit the sale of fireworks and control when and where fireworks can be set off. You can also prohibit the use of fireworks or require permits and proper training and certification.



WHO ELSE HAS TAKEN ACTION?

City of Vancouver:

Bylaw No. [12472](#)

District of Saanich:

Bylaw No. [8865](#)

City of Mission:

Bylaw No. [1706](#)

Find more BC SPCA-recommended progressive bylaws [here](#).



YOU CAN HELP HUMANELY CONTROL RODENTS

Even though rodents and other wild animals can pose a health risk or be seen as a nuisance, they don't deserve to be treated inhumanely.

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Each year, millions of rodents and other animals suffer cruel deaths from inhumane pest control methods like glueboards and poison. Rodents trapped on glueboards often die slowly from suffocation, dehydration or exposure. Birds, small animals such as squirrels or chipmunks, and cats can also be trapped and die on glueboards.

Rodent poisons (rodenticides) cause a slow, painful death and can also kill owls, eagles, cats and dogs who eat poisoned rodents or the poison itself.

Thanks to action by thousands of animal welfare supporters and over 20 B.C. municipalities, the provincial government announced a temporary ban on three specific second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in July of 2021, then a permanent ban set for January 21, 2023. Find out more [here](#).



WHAT CAN WE DO?

You can personally take steps to rodent-proof your home, car or office, use [AnimalKind](#) standards to humanely control nuisance wildlife and encourage your friends and neighbours to do the same. As a local government, you can adopt policies to ban the use of all types of harmful rodenticides and glueboards on all municipal property and educate your residents on humane methods of rodent control.



WHO ELSE HAS TAKEN ACTION?

At least 23 B.C. municipalities (listed [here](#)) have passed motions or bylaws to ban all rodenticides (not just second-generation anticoagulants) on all municipal property to focus on prevention, exclusion and humane control.

Find more BC SPCA-recommended progressive bylaws [here](#).



YOU CAN REDUCE CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEOPLE & WILDLIFE

The most effective way to solve wildlife conflicts is to prevent them before they happen. Feeding wild animals is harmful and dangerous for us and them.

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? WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE?

When wild animals eat human food instead of their natural diet, their health suffers. If they come to rely on us for food, it can disrupt their natural movement and migration patterns and lead to the spread of disease. Wild animals who regularly interact with humans lose their healthy sense of fear and can become a nuisance and a public safety concern.

Even if feeding isn't intentional, wildlife can be attracted to our neighbourhoods by improperly stored garbage, compost, bird feeders, dirty barbecues, pet food, and fruit in trees or on the ground. Get more information about the dangers of feeding wildlife [here](#).

The B.C. *Wildlife Act* only prohibits the feeding of dangerous wildlife such as bears, cougars, coyotes or wolves, leaving local governments to regulate the feeding and management of attractants for other wildlife species.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

You can personally refrain from feeding wild animals, make sure you properly manage your garbage, compost, gardens and barbecues and encourage your friends and neighbours to do the same.

As a local government, you can adopt bylaws that prohibit intentional feeding and require proper storage and management of attractants.



WHO ELSE HAS TAKEN ACTION?

District of Tumbler Ridge: Bylaw No. 692	City of Vancouver: Bylaw No. 13321	City of Coquitlam: Bylaw No. 4284
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Find more BC SPCA-recommended progressive bylaws [here](#).



YOU CAN ADVOCATE FOR PET-FRIENDLY HOUSING

British Columbia is in a housing crisis, and finding a home that allows pets is even more difficult. Vulnerable people that need a pet's companionship the most often have the hardest time.

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WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE?

Most pet owners consider their animals an important part of their family, and research has proven that pets improve our physical, mental and emotional health and well-being. However, many families have to make the heartbreaking choice between keeping their pets and finding a place to live. Approximately 25% of all cats and dogs surrendered to the BC SPCA (totaling more than 11,000 animals and families over the past eight years) are victims of a lack of pet-friendly housing.

Already vulnerable populations, including those earning low incomes, young people, seniors and women are disproportionately impacted by the lack of pet-friendly housing across the province - and these are the very people who often rely on the love and support of their pets the most.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

Although local governments are not primarily responsible for housing, you can call on the provincial government to increase the availability and affordability of pet-friendly housing in your community and across British Columbia. You can also work with MLAs, housing developers, non-profit housing providers and landlords in your community to advocate for more pet-friendly housing and find creative solutions that protect families with pets as well as landlords and stratas.



WHO ELSE HAS TAKEN ACTION?

Ontario's *Residential Tenancies Act* does not allow landlords to include "no pet" clauses in rental agreements or to charge additional pet deposits on top of regular damage deposits. In 2020, the City of Vancouver passed a *motion* to ask the province to prohibit "no pet" clauses in rental contracts in B.C.



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YOU CAN PROVIDE PUBLIC SPACES FOR DOGS

Safe, accessible dog-friendly spaces, especially in higher density neighbourhoods, can be important places for dogs and people to exercise and socialize outdoors.

? WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE?

Increasing rates of pet ownership and increasing density in our neighbourhoods mean there is less private space for dogs (like personal backyards). This has created a growing demand for safe, accessible, dog-friendly public spaces. Research has shown that pets contribute to their owner's mental, physical and emotional health, so making communities more welcoming for dogs is also an investment in people's health and well-being.

Dog-friendly public spaces can be a great place for well-socialized dogs and their owners to exercise, enjoy the outdoors and socialize with other dogs and people. Designated off-leash areas can reduce conflicts with other park users, reduce unsanctioned off-leash activity in more sensitive areas and protect wildlife.

💡 WHAT CAN WE DO?

You can talk to your friends, neighbours and dog owners in your community to find out what spaces they use and value, and what else might be needed.

As a local government, you can analyze access to and distribution of safe, accessible dog-friendly spaces throughout your community and allocate land and financing to develop more spaces where needed.

✓ WHO ELSE HAS TAKEN ACTION?

The City of Vancouver adopted its [People, Parks and Dogs: A Strategy for Sharing Vancouver's Parks](#) in 2017.

The District of Saanich is currently developing a [People, Pets and Parks](#) strategy.