

Interpersonal Violence and Abuse and Animal Safekeeping



Who are we?

STOPS to Violence

- ▶ A province wide partnership dedicated to mutual support and sharing of information and creative ideas, promoting healthy relationships and eliminating violence and abuse so all can live a safe, secure and valued life.

Saskatchewan SPCA

- ▶ A provincial organization dedicated to the welfare of animals that promotes the humane treatment of animals through education and prevention programs.



What's the connection?

- ▶ There is a link between interpersonal violence and abuse and animal abuse:
 - Cruelty to animals is frequently both an INDICATOR and a PREDICTOR of interpersonal, family and community violence.
- ▶ When animals are abused, people are at risk.
- ▶ When people are abused, animals are at risk.
- ▶ No one agency alone can deal with the issues of animal abuse and interpersonal violence.



What if...

- ▶ Someone is staying in an abusive relationship because they are concerned about the safety and well being of their animals?
 - Emotional support and security
 - Assets and income
- ▶ Animals are at risk as well as humans?
- ▶ Someone needs help to find emergency placement for animals if they want to leave a situation of domestic violence?



“Interpersonal Violence and Animal Safekeeping”

Project goals

- ▶ To improve our understanding of:
 - the concern for the safety of pets and livestock as a barrier to individuals leaving situations of interpersonal violence and abuse in Saskatchewan
 - the existing networks and supports in Saskatchewan who provide safekeeping of animals
- ▶ To identify opportunities and options for developing a provincial program for the safekeeping of animals to support people in addressing interpersonal violence and abuse



Our team

- ▶ Working committee
 - SSPCA
 - STOPS to Violence
 - Ministry of Justice
 - Ministry of Social Services – Child & Family Services
 - Provincial Association of Transition Houses & Services of Sask (PATHS)
 - Community Research Unit



Our process

- ▶ Survey and interviews
 - Animal welfare agencies:
 - SPCAs and Humane Societies
 - SVMA
 - Human service agencies:
 - Domestic violence shelters
 - Victim Services
 - Domestic violence outreach services
- ▶ Promising practices from other jurisdictions
- ▶ Analysis of gaps and opportunities
- ▶ Development of next steps



What we are learning...

Animal Welfare Agencies

- ▶ In general, many animal welfare agencies provide short term, temporary care for animals
- ▶ Other temporary animal care and fostering networks that provide short term care are active throughout the province, in addition to SPCAs, Humane Societies and SVMA members.
- ▶ Three respondents have been requested to assist with temporary care for people who are leaving abusive relationships.



What we are learning...

Animal Welfare Agencies

- ▶ There are existing programs, supports and resources for animal safekeeping support for people leaving abusive relationships in some areas.
- ▶ Some respondents have indicated an interest in learning more about how they might support animals in situations where people are leaving abusive relationships.



What we are learning...

Animal Welfare Agencies

- ▶ A majority of respondents do not feel there is adequate access to animal safekeeping services in their area to support people to successfully leave abusive relationships.
- ▶ Over half of respondents would like more information about animal safekeeping and interpersonal violence.
 - Service providers in the area
 - Training about animal safety and interpersonal violence and abuse
 - Supporting someone to plan for animal safekeeping



What we are learning...

Human Service Agencies

- ▶ There is a strong link between a person's decision to leave an abusive relationship and consideration for the safety of their animals.
- ▶ Nearly all respondents are aware of someone who has not left an abusive relationship because of a concern for the safety of animals.
- ▶ The length of time care is required for and cost can be barriers to finding adequate care for animals.



What we are learning...

Human Service Agencies

- ▶ Human service agencies do not feel they are able to effectively respond to requests for assistance with animal safekeeping. Knowing more about the available options and foster care would help.
- ▶ Human service agencies are not able to transport animals for safekeeping.



What we are learning...

Human Service Agencies

- ▶ A majority of respondents do not feel there is adequate access to animal safekeeping supports in their area to assist individuals to successfully leave an abusive relationship.
- ▶ Nearly all respondents to date would like more information about animal safekeeping and interpersonal violence.
 - Service providers in the area
 - Supporting someone to plan for animal safekeeping
 - Training about animal safety and interpersonal violence and abuse



Potential Next Steps

- ▶ Key areas for short term development
 - Linking existing service providers – animal welfare and human services
 - Distributing information about animal safety and interpersonal violence and abuse
 - Developing tools and training



Long term potentials

- ▶ Establishing a coalition of animal welfare organizations and human service agencies to work jointly on solutions.
- ▶ Strengthening programs to assist all victims of violence – including animals.
- ▶ Educating the public about the link between animal abuse and domestic violence.



Long term potentials

- ▶ Developing a protocol for cross-reporting of cases of abuse and neglect – human and animal.
- ▶ Developing cross-training programs – Animal Protection Officers need to know what to look for and what to do in relation to domestic abuse AND human service providers need to know what to look for and what to do in relation to animal abuse.

