

BC SPCA Strategic Plan Consultation: Agriculture Industry

July 18, 2013

Abbotsford Agriculture Centre

Barb Ydenberg, Barb Grimmer attended for BCSF

Goals: To provide input into the BC SPCA strategic planning process to determine how BCSPCA can be most effective in improving the welfare of farm animals in BC, identify further opportunities for collaboration with animal agriculture, and to consider how government can best support animal welfare in BC.

Mission of BCSPCA: To protect and enhance the quality of life for companion and farm animals.

The BCSPCA consists of 425 staff, 4000+ volunteers, 80,000 donors. There are 35,000 animals cared for per year. 6,000 investigations per year. It receives no government funding. There are 26 constables.

BCSPCA uses the Codes of Practice as a guide for animal welfare standards and a reference document for cruelty investigations. The new Codes have requirements (must do) and recommendations (should do). How will it be enforced? We were told this is up to industry.

The Code was developed with participants from industry, veterinarians, public, UBC Animal Welfare academics and Animal Control.

A survey was conducted with over 7,000 responses. Only a few (23) came from people who identified as being with animal agriculture.

The general public ranked the priorities for the SPCA as animal cruelty investigations>decreasing pet population>sheltering abandoned or seized animals>advocating for animal welfare>increasing care standard for food animals.

The farming community ranked the priorities for the SPCA as animal cruelty investigations>decreasing pet population>youth education>providing shelter and low cost veterinary care>advocating for animal welfare.

SPCA is funded as a charity by 80,000 individuals, with a budget of \$28 million.

How can BCSPCA be more effective? Education, working with industry, more enforcement [were comments made by the ag industry.](#)

How could we collaborate more? Using industry expertise to train constables, producing memorandum of understanding with industry

Ministry of Agriculture: no one in the Ministry is dedicated to animal welfare; there is decreased livestock specialist support

Out of 6,000 cruelty investigations, 75% are with companion animals. Of the farm animal complaints, about ten to 12 % are horses. This would be more but many of the horses are in areas without SPCA, are native owned.

On Farm Assurance – SPCA Certified. Established 12 years ago when welfare standards for livestock were lower. With new codes, they approach SPCA certified standards. Differentiated product may mislead public in that other farms are doing the same thing as SPCA certified. The “rewards program” has been beneficial to those farmers involved; some are ok with it (chicken industry) and some are not (dairy industry). Abattoirs are not on the radar and want to be, were present at meeting. Need their own code of practice. Same as auction. At the cattle feeders AGM they shared meeting with BC Abattoir Assn. Had an animal welfare panel for 1.5 hours to discuss issues. Code of practice is viewed as an educational tool for some; most people will practice good management. [The big question for producers is always “How much will it cost and what will I get out of it?”](#)

Commodity Assurance Programs: CSF – On Farm Food Safe, AAFC Biosecurity Std, NFACC Code of Practice. These should be combined somehow so only one audit.

It was mentioned that Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act may refer to codes of practice in some provinces. Would be standard for enforcement. BCSPCA seldom has to deal with commercial producers. Most complaints are with smaller mixed farms. Industry does not want to deal with them either – outside the regulated industry i.e. pork.

Dealing with welfare issues starts with education – out of 6,000 investigations only 130 will involve seizures. They happen when there is no change or cooperation.

Idea to have a memorandum of understanding – complaints within industry, use peer advisors to help with situation. In one situation, the seizure of a herd was stopped because of industry assistance.

[The BCSPCA has Memorandum of Understanding with the Horse Council and with the BCCA. Would be good to get a copy of these to follow for the Sheep Federation.](#)

There are 26 special constables. They could be invited by industry for special training sessions.

Suggest that industry-government-SPCA coordinate through a task force, committee, or such body.

Auctions were brought up – how are they dealt with? Ministry of Ag is supposed to be involved. CFIA is only there to deal with transport issues. SPCA will deal with welfare issues but need to be informed. Auction doesn't want to scare sellers or buyers away. How do we ensure good animal welfare there?

Copy of presentation will be distributed to people who attended meeting.

Government support is needed to move forward. To distribute the new Codes and get Codes into producers' hands, we need government funding all around to BCFACC, BCSPCA, Commodity groups and farmers institutes. [More formal dialogue between associations and the SPCA and keep it ongoing.](#)
[Inclusiveness of the auction houses.](#)

Other notes:

On encouraging continuous improvement in animal welfare:

The Code of Practice stops at the farm gate. It does not apply to transport or processing.

It is multi-species owners who are most often in trouble.

Many participants at the table suggested that joint press releases would be beneficial in order to circumvent all farmers of a particular industry being tainted with the same brush when an issue is publicized.

On addressing animals in distress:

It was suggested to follow the example of the Alberta Alert lines.

The process is complaint to investigation to orders to seizures.

The preparedness of constables was questioned, as was their level of expertise. A vet is always engaged on a complaint. The suggestion of peer advisors came up – they must be made aware of the responsibilities, rights and powers. It was also discussed that when a seizure occurs that correct transport and rehousing occur.

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