The role of the RSPCA in advocating and providing for better human and animal welfare

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Introduction

• Roles of the RSPCA

• **Advocacy**

• RSPCA programs nationally

• RSPCA activities in South Australia
Roles of the RSPCA

• Law enforcement
• Animal rescue
• Shelter
• Adoption
• Prevention
Prevention of Cruelty

Role of the Animal Welfare Advocate
- Education
- Campaigns
- Advocacy

Advocacy
- Animal Ethics Committee
- Animal Welfare Advisory Committee - Minister
- Industry liaison - agriculture, entertainment
- Collaborative partnerships - human/animal bond
Human-Animal Bond

Benefits **OF** companion animals
- Companionship, security, social interaction\(^1\)
- Health\(^2,3\)

Benefits **TO** companion animals
- Basic needs - food, water, shelter, exercise
- Appropriate care - grooming, vet care
- Companionship (social animals)

\(^1\) ABS 1995  
\(^2\) Herzog 2011  
\(^3\) Chur-Hansen 2010
RSPCA NSW

Dedicated unit - 7 staff incl 4 case workers and 1 veterinarian

Safe Bed for Pets
- Emergency pet accommodation for families fleeing domestic violence
- Referred by domestic violence support agencies

POOPS - Pets of Older Persons
- >65 yo or any palliative care patients
- Pet care including veterinary treatment, grooming & accommodation

Living Ruff - homeless
- Pet care including veterinary treatment, grooming & accommodation

Source: RSPCA NSW website
RSPCA NSW

2014

- 366 pets given emergency accommodation
- 305 home visits
- 331 pets vaccinated
- 93 desexed
- 60 micro-chipped

(Source: RSPCA NSW 2014 Annual Report
RSPCA South Australia

Key aims

• the importance of the human animal bond
• the essential role of community services in assisting owners to care for their companion animal resulting in better outcomes for their client and their animal (including whether a pet should be acquired)
• the role and capacity of the RSPCA
• the benefits of working collaboratively

Key areas

• Disabilities
• Mental health
• Domestic violence
• Elderly
Disabilities SA

Role Model - since 2009

• ‘Animals Matter’ Working Group
• Worker Guide
• Intranet website
• Animal friendly policies
• MOU
Mental health

• Emergency accommodation - 7 days free but major problems if more is required

• Survey of care workers

• Training session for care workers

• MOU - management to acknowledge

Note: In SA, can only prohibit animal ownership if prosecuted, whereas in Victoria this can be done by a magistrate if deemed necessary without the need to prosecute.
Mental health - survey of care workers

Do you believe pets have a positive or negative effect on clients?

- Positive, 97.5%
- Negative, 0.0%
- Unknown, 2.5%

Do you have clients who deferred treatment due to the cost implications of caring for or feeding their pets?

- Yes, 66.3%
- No, 33.8%

Do you have clients who discharged themselves from hospital because of concerns around the health and safety of their pet?

- Yes, 62.5%
- No, 37.5%
Animal Hoarding

- An accumulation of an unusually large number of animals & failure to provide minimal care but owner(s) convinced that are providing appropriate care

- Concerns - public health, individual health & animal welfare

- 2013 ‘A Foot in the Door’ government initiative to improve interagency collaboration to address hoarding

- Case 1

- Case 2
Animal Hoarding - Case 1

• Combination of severe hoarding & squalor but only a very small number of pets inadequately cared for
Animal Hoarding - Case 1
Animal Hoarding - Case 1
Animal Hoarding - Case 1
Animal Hoarding - Case 1
Animal Hoarding - Case 2

- Over 130 dogs in appalling condition - multiple bitches with pups; unsocialised so difficult and stressful to handle; open infected wounds, severe worm and flea infestations, mange, emaciated, matted coats, no dental care, untreated injuries

- Charges: 11 x Neglect so as to cause harm

- Penalty: suspended 2 months imprisonment

- Moved to Victoria
Animal Hoarding - Case 2
Animal Hoarding - Case 2
Animal Hoarding

Recommendations

• Increased awareness to achieve early intervention involving multi-agency approach
• Training of case workers
• Follow-up support to prevent recurrence
• Research - key factors; treatment & prevention
• Specific legislation - definition; early intervention; mandatory treatment; prohibit animal ownership; cross reporting
Domestic violence

- Implications with companion animals
  - delay fleeing\(^4\)
  - animal abuse\(^5\)
  - impact on children\(^6\)
  - need for emergency accommodation

- Emergency accommodation
  - RSPCA SA ‘Safe kennel’ project
  - Foster care program in collaboration with support agencies
  - Vet clinic foster care program

- Impact on children
  - Counselling
  - Empathy programs

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\(^4\) Ascione 2007
\(^5\) Tiplady 2012
\(^6\) Currie 2006
The Elderly

• Greater support for the elderly to remain in their home but this may not include assistance with a companion animal

• Flinders University Work Placement Project
  • Review current resources available by collating information from support services
  • Identify needs through group discussion and individual interview
  • Outcomes include a booklet for care workers, information leaflet and follow-up project with Charles Sturt Council
Grief counselling

- Recent bush fires
  - Pet loss & distressing animal related experiences by fire fighters & volunteers
  - Offer of one session by qualified counsellor
  - Referral through support agencies

- Recognised impact of pet loss for children and the elderly

- Ongoing pet loss grief counselling

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7 Kaufman & Kaufman 2006
8 Krause-Parello & Guilick 2013
Summary

- RSPCA is extending its role in the human-animal bond area
- Significant benefits can be gained through collaboration including attracting funding
- Recognition of the role of support agencies to assist owners to provide appropriate care to clients
- Better welfare for animals
Acknowledgements

RSPCA NSW

Leanne Head, Disabilities SA

Prof Nik Taylor & Dr Heather Fraser, Flinders University

Mary-Rose Alfonsi, Flinders University

Gail Freeman, Playford Mental Health Services

Dr Susan Hazel, University of Adelaide

Dr Andrew Spanner, Walkerville Veterinary Hospital

Dian Fowles, Flinders University

Mandy Paterson, RSPCA Qld
Any Questions?

I think there’s a spy among us...
References

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics. Special Feature: household pets, Canberra Aust 1995


7 Kaufman KR and Kaufman N. And then the dog died. Death Studies 2006 30: 61-76

8 Krause-Parelo, CA & Gulick, EE Situational factors related to loneliness and loss over time among older pet owners. Western Journal of Nursing Research 2013 35(7) 905-919