



BC SPCA Charitable Tax # BN 11881 9036 RR0001

*The BC SPCA would like to thank the thousands of concerned individuals who have contacted us expressing their deep concern over the horrific slaughter of 100 sled dogs in Whistler. It is heartening to know that there are so many people who share our shock over this distressing incident and who join us in our fight against animal cruelty.*

*We regret that, due to the overwhelming volume of calls and emails, we cannot respond personally to each person but we have outlined answers to many of the frequently asked questions we have received in order to share this information as widely as possible. We will also be posting updates on our website ([spca.bc.ca](http://spca.bc.ca)) as new developments occur.*

#### **What is the BC SPCA's involvement in the Whistler investigation?**

The BC SPCA is the only animal welfare organization in the province with the mandate and authority to respond to complaints of animal cruelty. Our 25 special constables carry out 7,000 cruelty investigations each year and we are currently working with the RCMP to investigate the case of the 100 dogs killed in Whistler. We are gathering evidence as quickly as possible and will be filing a report with Crown counsel regarding charges of animal cruelty against the individuals responsible.

#### **What is happening with the remaining dogs on the site?**

BC SPCA constables have inspected the site and have confirmed that the owners are meeting the care and welfare needs of the remaining dogs. As a result of SPCA orders that have been issued in the past the animals are now housed in pens rather than on chains, are grouped together for socialization and are receiving regular veterinary care.

We have received many questions about why the BC SPCA cannot seize the remaining animals or shut down the operation. While we completely empathize with the heartfelt concerns expressed for the dogs, the BC SPCA is legally required to give any animal owner the opportunity to respond to orders to improve the welfare of their animals. If the owner complies with the orders and the animals' care and welfare needs are being met the BC SPCA has no legal grounds to seek a warrant to remove the animals. With regard to shutting down the tour operator, the BC SPCA's powers under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act enable the BC SPCA to take animals into custody if orders are not complied with, but do not include the power to close a business operation.

**Was the BC SPCA approached to help rehome any of the dogs who were later slaughtered?**

No, the BC SPCA was not approached to help rehome any of these animals. The BC SPCA met with the tour operator on May 28, 2010 - more than one month after the cull. This meeting was called to discuss ways to improve welfare for the animals, but there was no request for assistance in rehoming animals and details of the April 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> slaughter were not disclosed to the SPCA.

**When did the BC SPCA first learn of the slaughter of the dogs?**

The BC SPCA first learned of the incident on Jan. 28, 2011 after receiving a copy of a WorkSafeBC report from CKNW Radio, which outlined details of the killings by an employee who was being granted compensation for post traumatic stress disorder. A cruelty investigation was immediately launched in the case.

**Did the tour operator approach the BC SPCA to try to adopt dogs following this meeting on May 28?**

Yes, the tour operator approached the BC SPCA in July 2010 about whether or not the SPCA would be able to take any dogs in the future, but did not indicate any urgency in the request. As a charity with very limited resources, the society did not have the capacity to assist at that time. The BC SPCA has seized and cared for a significant number of sled dogs in recent years and understands the immense commitment of financial and rehabilitation resources that are required to provide the necessary care and welfare for these animals. Two months later, in September 2010, the BC SPCA was again approached about rehoming some of the operator's dogs and was in a better position to help. We offered to take 40-60 dogs to try to find homes for them. The tour operator subsequently informed the SPCA that he had moved the dogs to other kennels and did not need assistance.

**Are any of the Whistler dogs currently available for adoption?**

At this time the BC SPCA is unaware of any intention by the owner of the dogs to adopt or sell any of the remaining animals.

**What is the BC SPCA responsibility in rehoming animals no longer wanted by sled dog tour operators?**

We have received some comments that it was the SPCA's "job" to take all the animals the tour operator wanted to dispose of. The BC SPCA provides care, sheltering, veterinary care and rehabilitation for nearly 34,000 animals each year - our shelters and foster homes are overflowing with animals whose owners can't - or won't - accept responsibility for them. We take our care of any animal in need extremely seriously - this is our mission and our passion and we use every resource available to us to help as many animals as possible.

However if we are ever to achieve an end to animal cruelty and neglect in our communities it is critical that the SPCA and other rescue groups not be viewed as a dumping ground for owners who simply abdicate their responsibility to the animals they have brought into their lives - as pets or as commodities to make money. If a sled dog company purchases or breeds hundreds of dogs to maximize their profits they should also be responsible for developing a

lifelong welfare plan for these animals that includes ongoing care and welfare and “retirement” arrangements for the dogs who are no longer used by their operation.

The sad reality - and one of the reasons that the BC SPCA has long expressed concerns about the sled dog industry (see most recent position statement attached)- is that dogs are regularly euthanized when they have outlived their economic usefulness to the operator. This practice is distressing to the SPCA, even when it is done in a humane manner.

### **What are the next steps?**

The BC SPCA’s cruelty investigation into this case continues and charges of animal cruelty are pending. In addition, the BC SPCA has been asked to sit on a task force announced by Premier Gordon Campbell on Feb. 3, 2011 to look into provincial regulations for the sled dog industry. We will be urging the government to take steps to ensure that if sled dog companies are allowed to operate they be held accountable for the lifelong care and welfare of the animals they use for economic gain.

### **How can the public help?**

If you would like to join us in the fight against animal cruelty, there are a number of ways in which you can help to bring about change:

1. Contact your local MLA to express your strong support for significant funding for animal cruelty investigations. The BC SPCA currently spends more than \$2.2 million a year investigating more than 7,000 complaints of animal cruelty and neglect. Despite this annual investment, we simply do not have enough officers in the field. We receive no provincial government funding for this work and must raise all funds for our cruelty investigations and other animal protection work through donations.
2. Contact all the candidates in the provincial leadership race to express your support for specialized Crown counsel for animal cruelty cases and significant funding for the work of the BC SPCA.
3. Contact your local MP and ask them to ensure the swift passage of legislation that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of animals across Canada. Although penalties for animal cruelty were recently increased, Canada’s federal animal cruelty laws have seen no significant improvement in more than 100 years.
4. Make a donation to help animals in need, online at [spca.bc.ca](http://spca.bc.ca), through your local SPCA branch (donations designated to a particular shelter or to the cruelty investigations department can also be sent by mail to 1245 East 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5T 1R1). Your support saves lives and enables us to provide emergency rescue and care for nearly 34,000 animals each year. The work of the BC SPCA would not be possible without our caring and compassionate supporters.