

SPCA VIEW ON FOSTERING

The SPCA movement in South Africa does not permit the fostering of SPCA animals. This is in terms of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 169 of 1993.

Background

At the 2009 AGM of the National Council of SPCAs, the SPCA uMgeni (formerly Howick) proposed that "at the discretion of individual Societies (for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – SPCAs) animals may be placed in suitable temporary foster homes provided such foster homes are assessed, approved and regularly monitored by SPCA officers."

"Fostering would be subject to strict records being maintained and with the SPCA retaining full rights to the fostered animals."

The advantages of fostering were put forward, the issue was debated. The motion was defeated.

Arguments against fostering included:-

- There is an over-population of animals and insufficient responsible, permanent homes.
- Fostering would lead to more animals being kept on a temporary basis but not necessarily being permanently homed.
- In fact their chances of a permanent home decreased as individuals went to SPCAs to look for a pet but would be unwilling or unable to visit private homes to view animals.
- Fosterers may be unwilling to permit or unable to accommodate such viewing.
- There are insufficient adequate fosterers. An organisation which fosters is appealing for more people to come forward for this function.
- Not all animals at SPCAs can be fostered in that many are awaiting the outcome of Court cases and to allow them out of the custody of an SPCA could breach terms and conditions of their seizure and therefore damage the case.
- SPCA Inspectors have a heavy workload which already includes the legal requirement of a pre-home and post-home check for every potential or actual adoption.
- Assessing foster homes and ongoing monitoring increases the workload, potentially to the point that investigations of cruelty cases or emergency response could be compromised.
- Above all, it was felt to be unfair to the animals. Pets bond. To place an animal in a temporary home for an unknown and non-prescribed period leads to bonding between animal/s and human/s. To then release the animal/s to another home causes unnecessary stress and the animal having to adapt yet again to new surroundings, new circumstances, new people and in all likelihood differing behavioural boundaries.
- Fostering is especially difficult with regard to animals that have been confiscated (legally seized due to cruelty, abuse, abandonment or neglect). They bond strongly

with their perceived rescuers so it is important that they are not then put through a further experience of being "passed on."

- Many SPCA animals have special needs including behavioural and emotional. The quality of a "home" does not relate solely to the property, diet and degree of attention.
- Legal issues arise especially in relation to paying for veterinary accounts if a fostered animal becomes injured, sick or attacks or infects another animal on the fosterer's property. There is no contingency for this and SPCAs cannot be held liable yet fosterers expect some kind of insurance or protection for such eventualities.

The issue of fostering continues to arise. To establish a separate fostering unit of personnel to oversee fostering involves finance. Many SPCAs find themselves in financial dire straits already.

Assessing individuals and properties requires knowledge and experience – a qualification preferably – and cannot be left or delegated, no matter how well-meaning those people may be.

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