

# Saskatchewan Veterinarians' Animal Welfare Handbook





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## Preface

Veterinarians are animal health experts that have extensive knowledge of animal diseases and conditions and their appropriate treatments. A veterinarian's expertise is also essential for the relief and prevention of animal pain, distress and suffering. The role of veterinarians in raising animal welfare issues with their clients and ensuring humane treatment of animals is to be encouraged as a positive, rather than intrusive, approach. Animal owners need to see that animal welfare is important to their veterinarians, and promoting animal welfare is an important component of veterinary practice.

The goal of this handbook is to support veterinarians in their decision to raise welfare concerns with their clients and provide guidance for veterinarians in their leadership role as animal welfare advocates. Ideally, veterinarians will have their own practice policy for how animal welfare issues are managed. This proactive approach will guide the veterinarian to ensure the welfare of animals under their care and demonstrate to clients and the public their commitment in addressing animal welfare concerns.

## Definitions

- *Body Condition Score*: a hands-on method of assessing the amount of fat cover on an animal. It is an important tool in assessing the nutritional status of animals.
- *Companion Animals*: animals kept as pets.
- *Distress*: an animal is in distress if it is:
  - o deprived of:
  - o food or water sufficient to maintain the animal in a state of good health;

- o care or shelter; or
- o veterinary care or medical attention;
- o in need of reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold;
- o wounded, ill, in pain, suffering, abused or neglected;
- o kept in conditions that:
  - o are unsanitary;
  - o will significantly impair the animal's health or well-being over time;
  - o cause the animal extreme anxiety or suffering; or
  - o contravene the prescribed standards, codes of practice or guidelines; or
- o abandoned by its owner or by a person responsible for the animal in a manner that causes, or is likely to cause, distress resulting from any or all of the factors listed in this section.
- o An animal is not considered to be in distress if it is handled:
  - o in the case of a class of animals for which there is a standard, code of practice or guideline that is prescribed as acceptable, in a manner consistent with the standard, code of practice or guideline that is prescribed as acceptable;
  - o in accordance with generally accepted practices of animal management; or
  - o in a manner that is otherwise reasonable in the circumstances.
- *Owner*: farmer, pet owner, person responsible for the animal.
- *Animal protection agency*: any organization that is designated for the protection of animals. This includes humane societies that employ animal protection officers.



## Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan

Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan (APSS) was formed on April 1, 2015, as a non-profit corporation to investigate public complaints of animal abuse, cruelty and neglect. APSS's animal protection officers (APOs) investigate animal welfare concerns throughout the province, focusing on rural areas and communities without animal protection agencies that hire their own APOs.

APSS is directed by a volunteer board and operates independently of other humane societies. They do not fundraise, but have a funding agreement with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

All other animal protection agencies within the province are independently operated and fundraise in their community to support their work. Animal protection agencies in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert hire APOs to respond to companion animal complaints within their jurisdictions. They may have municipal agreements to do by-law enforcement or act as a pound.

For more information regarding APSS, or to report an incident:

Contact anonymously from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

306-382-0002

or Toll Free 1-844-382-0002

[animalprotectionservices.ca](http://animalprotectionservices.ca)

After hours, call your local police.





## **Providing Veterinary Expertise for an Animal Welfare Case**

An APO may contact a veterinarian to provide expert advice for the following:

- Nutritional requirements for animals;
- Injury and disease management;
- Recommendation for euthanasia;
- Assessment for seizure of animals;
- Humane transport decision; or
- Expert witness at trial.

Outlined below is the animal welfare investigation process.

### **Contacting the Police or Animal Protection Agency**

When a complaint about an animal welfare concern is brought to the attention of the police or animal protection agency, usually the first step is to determine the validity of the complaint. This is done by the APO or police officer going to the location and conducting an initial inspection/assessment.

If there is a problem, the nature and severity of the problem is evaluated.

- a. If there is inadequate food, water, shelter or care (including veterinary care), the APO will attempt to resolve the concern through discussion with, and education of, the owner.
- b. If the APO needs expert advice, often the first to be called is a veterinarian. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) or municipal police, feed specialists, regional livestock specialists, animal agriculture specialists or social services personnel may also be contacted.
- c. The APO may enter properties with a search warrant for investigation, to seize and remove animals, to euthanize animals in certain conditions, and otherwise act to relieve the animals of their distress, pain and suffering. In most cases, when animals are seized a medical evaluation is completed by a veterinarian.

## Typical Animal Welfare Case Examples

### a. *Inadequate veterinary care*

Examples: cattle with severe pinkeye or cancer eye, a horse with an untreated skin wound or overgrown hooves, or an injured dog left untreated.

In these cases, the APO will provide written recommendations and timelines for the owner to seek appropriate veterinary treatment for the conditions noted.

### b. *Deficiency of feed, water, shelter, or care*

Examples: a herd of very thin cattle deficient in feed and water, or companion animals not provided with adequate shelter.

In these cases, the APO may seek veterinary advice on the body condition of animals and the health status to determine what action to take. Body condition scoring is an excellent way to objectively assess the nutritional state of the animals. A written report of the veterinarian's observations and advice may be requested. The APO will consider this advice when determining corrective action. Usually a follow-up visit is made by the APO to monitor compliance and to re-evaluate status of the animals.

### c. *Serious animal welfare situation*

Examples: starvation of cattle or severely neglected or abused companion animals.



In these cases, veterinary advice is sought to determine the status of animals that are still alive. Action may include the euthanasia of animals for humane reasons. The decision to humanely euthanize some animals is usually made jointly between the APO and the veterinarian (see Section 13(9) in *The Animal Protection Act, 2018* for more information).

## **Submission of Samples/Necropsy**

A complete post mortem examination should be performed to accurately determine cause of death. This may involve collecting samples (including photographs) during an on-site post-mortem and submission to a diagnostic laboratory. Animal carcasses may also be submitted to the veterinary laboratory for necropsy. Laboratory records may become court documents if the case proceeds to trial.

## **Seizing Animals/Transport**

The APO may decide to immediately seize the remaining animals. Veterinary advice may be sought regarding the ability of the animals to withstand handling, loading and transport to another location. The process of seizing the animals, arranging for loading and transport is carried out by the attending APO.

## **Veterinarians Reporting Cruelty Cases**

Occasionally a veterinarian is confronted, either directly or indirectly, with animal welfare concerns. Perhaps while attending a call, the client comments about a neighbour who is “starving his cattle.” Another example would be when a veterinarian notices, while tending to a client’s animals, that the general state of the animals on the farm borders on cruelty (neglect, starvation or untreated disease in other animals).

In Saskatchewan, veterinarians now have a legal obligation to report suspected cases of animal cruelty under *The Animal Protection Act, 2018* (section 7.1-2). Moreover, veterinarians have an ethical and professional obligation, set out in Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association (SVMA) bylaws, to protect animal welfare and alleviate animal suffering. However, this does not mean that reporting a client is the only action a veterinarian may

take when faced with a suspected case of animal cruelty. The veterinarian's action may involve presenting their concerns to the owner and attempting to educate them regarding responsible animal care. If the situation is resolved, it may not need to be reported. Alternatively, the concern can be presented to the APO or the local policing agency for assessment. All such complaints to the APO remain confidential.

## **Veterinarian's Report**

The veterinarian's report is the notes the veterinarian takes during the investigation. These notes are disclosed to the court and used to determine what the veterinarian may say at the trial.

- The veterinarian's report is written as immediately and as accurately as possible. The veterinarian may use an assistant to write notes, take their own notes or use a voice recorder.
- The report is concise and professional.
- The veterinarian must give a detailed assessment of the animals and environment.
- The veterinarian records the number and type of animals observed, including deceased animals, field necropsy findings, samples collected, location, surroundings, body condition score (use scale), injuries and/or illnesses and whether they were appropriately treated.
- The report gives a full description of food, water, shelter and care, including:
  - o Presence or absence;
  - o Quantity;
  - o Type;
  - o Quality; and
  - o Appropriateness.
- The veterinarian records husbandry practices, including identification, castration, weaning, shearing, hazards and the amount of feed on site.
- The veterinarian can use photos and/or videos to support observations.
  - o Show wide and close up views.
  - o Include something for scale if needed.
  - o Note both negatives and positives.

- o Reference supporting photos.
- The veterinarian can give opinions on:
  - o If the care and conditions were adequate; and
  - o If management practices compare to guidelines or accepted practices. For example: was the condition of the animals appropriate for the life stage? Reference the Standards, Codes of Practice or guidelines as listed in the appendix of the regulations if possible.

## **Veterinarian's Role at Trial**

Only a few cases each year move forward with legal involvement; however, each case should be approached as having the potential to proceed to trial. The veterinarian's observations must be recorded and a written report provided to the APO. In court, the veterinarian gives his or her professional opinion on the observations made during the case.

- The veterinarian is a key witness, often testifying in an expert capacity, and may be asked for curriculum vitae and experience.
- Giving evidence can take hours.
  - o The veterinarian should explain everything in laymen's terms.
  - o The veterinarian should recount the events of the day, including detailed observations.
  - o The veterinarian provides evidence of "distress".
  - o The veterinarian can give opinions (e.g., was the condition of the animals appropriate for the life stage). Reference the Standards, Codes of Practice or guidelines as listed in the appendix of the regulations.
- A trial will occur several months to years after the incident, therefore it is important to keep accurate records.
- Many court appearances may be needed.
- Disclosure:
  - o The veterinarian must release all materials from an investigation.
  - o The defense will look for missing items, such as a missing photo.
  - o The veterinarian must record all observations, not just the "bad" things that will help the case.

- o The veterinarian must keep everything, including original notes and blurry photos and videos.
- Cross examination by defense counsel:
  - o This is an essential component of the trial process.
  - o It explores all aspects of the case, including weaknesses.
  - o The quality of the veterinarian's notes, report and photos/video is crucial.
  - o The veterinarian should:
    - Try to recall as much detail as possible;
    - Keep everything related to the case;
    - Be well prepared;
    - Thoroughly review the case material;
    - Know the Codes of Practice; and
    - Speak to the Crown Prosecutor before the trial.



## Obligations and Legal Authority

### ***The Animal Protection Act, 2018***

*The Animal Protection Act, 2018* is available at [www.publications.gov.sk.ca](http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca) (Publications Saskatchewan).

### **Relevant Sections of Legislation**

#### *Owner or person responsible for an animal*

Under the authority of the *The Animal Protection Act, 2018*, no person responsible for an animal shall cause an animal to be in distress. The owner of an animal (or any person) has a responsibility to ensure that his or her animals are not in distress and action is taken to ensure their welfare. (Section 4(2) Prohibition: No person shall cause an animal to be in distress).

#### *Immunity*

*26 No action or proceeding lies or shall be commenced against the minister, the Crown in right of Saskatchewan, any animal protection officer, veterinarian, caretaker, animal protection agency or officer or employee of an animal protection agency if that person is acting pursuant to the authority of this Part or the regulations made pursuant to this Part, for anything in good faith done, caused or permitted or authorized to be done, attempted to be done or omitted to be done by that person or by any of those persons pursuant to or in the exercise or supposed exercise of any power conferred by this Part or the regulations made pursuant to this Part or in the carrying out or supposed carrying out of any order made pursuant to this Part or any duty imposed by this Part or the regulations.*

## Relieving animals in distress

*13(9) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Part, an animal protection officer may destroy an animal, or have an animal destroyed, if the animal is in such distress that, in the opinion of a veterinarian, or if a veterinarian is not readily available, in the opinion of the animal protection officer, the animal cannot be relieved of its distress.*

A veterinarian's opinion is often obtained during an investigation to determine the condition of the animals. Given that prosecution may ensue, it is important that all aspects of the assessment are accurately recorded.

## Authority to enter

*14(5) When exercising any power pursuant to this section, an animal protection officer may be accompanied by any specialist or expert whom the animal protection officer considers necessary to carry out the search and seizure or to diagnose and assist an animal in distress or likely to be in distress.*

## Veterinarian's Oath

I solemnly swear that I will use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society. I will strive to promote animal health and welfare, relieve animal suffering, protect the health of the public and environment, and advance comparative medical knowledge. I will practice my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics. I will strive continuously to improve my professional knowledge and competence and to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards for myself and the profession.

## SVMA Bylaws

Action is needed to address situations where there is cause to suspect unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress in an animal(s) or possible breaches of animal welfare legislation. If a situation is not resolved, then the veterinarian should take action and report their concern to an enforcement agency.

Veterinarians have a responsibility to relieve animal pain, distress and suffering as described in the Veterinarian's Oath. The members of the veterinary profession are viewed by the public and the courts



as the experts in animal health and welfare and, more broadly, of all animal diseases and conditions and their treatment. Veterinarians are essential in providing advice to the APO on whether an animal is in such distress it may not be relieved of it and should therefore be humanely euthanized.

While the SVMA bylaws clearly state that client confidentiality is a requirement for veterinarians, the provision exists to allow the release of privileged information when the law requires it or when cruelty to animals or humans is suspected. For more information, please review the SVMA bylaws on client confidentiality.

Refer to the SVMA bylaws for further explanation on the release of confidential information.

## **Standards, Codes of Practice and Guidelines**

The Codes of Practice, led by the National Farm Animal Care Council, serve as a national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended practices. They provide recommendations and requirements for practices related to housing, care, transportation and processing. The Codes of Practice also serve as educational tools and reference materials for regulations, as well as the foundation for animal care assessment programs.

The updated Codes of Practice, including body condition score, can be found on [www.nfacc.ca](http://www.nfacc.ca).

The American Veterinary Medical Association Euthanasia Guidelines, 2013, are available at [www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia.pdf](http://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia.pdf).

A Code of Practice for Canadian Cattery Operations, 2009, is available at [www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/a-code-of-practice-for-canadian-cattery-operations](http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/a-code-of-practice-for-canadian-cattery-operations).

A Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations: Third Edition (2018), published by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, is available at [www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/Code-of-Practice-for-Canadian-Kennel-Operations](http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/Code-of-Practice-for-Canadian-Kennel-Operations).

A Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Horses on PMU Ranches (2018) is available at [www.naeric.org/about.asp?strNav=5&strBtn=5](http://www.naeric.org/about.asp?strNav=5&strBtn=5).



## **Federal Animal Welfare Legislation and Humane Transportation Legislation and Guidelines**

### **Federal Animal Welfare Legislation**

The Criminal Code of Canada (sections 444 to 447) prohibits anyone from willfully causing animals to suffer from neglect, pain or injury. The Criminal Code is enforced by police services in the province of Saskatchewan. The Cruelty to Animals section of the Criminal Code is found at

[www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-216.html#h-119](http://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-216.html#h-119).

### **Humane Transportation**

Federal *Health of Animals Regulations* Part X11 Humane Transportation requirements can be found at

[www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/accredited-veterinarian-s-manual/chapter-11/eng/1345480750554/1345480857461?chap=1](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/accredited-veterinarian-s-manual/chapter-11/eng/1345480750554/1345480857461?chap=1).

The National Farm Animal Care Council's code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals can be found at

[www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/transport](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/transport).

### **Compromised Animals Policy**

CFIA's Transportation of Animals Program- Compromised Animals Policy is available at

[www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/humane-transport/compromised-animals-policy/eng/1360016317589/1360016435110](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/humane-transport/compromised-animals-policy/eng/1360016317589/1360016435110).

## Livestock Transport Requirements in Canada

Information for veterinarians and their clients is available at [www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/humane-transport/transport-requirements/eng/1363748532198/1363748620219](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/humane-transport/transport-requirements/eng/1363748532198/1363748620219).

Dr. Temple Grandin's website ([www.grandin.com](http://www.grandin.com)) also contains information on livestock care and transport.

Provincial livestock transportation legislation includes requirements for humane livestock transport in Saskatchewan. It is regulated by *The Livestock Inspection and Transportation Regulations*, 1978. These regulations are posted at [www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=1507](http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=1507).

A livestock manifest or permit is required for transporting livestock. Exemptions are given in section 6(1)(a) of *The Livestock Inspection and Transportation Regulations*, where it states that no livestock manifest, permit or horse transportation permit is required to transport livestock to or from a veterinary clinic. Sections 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 states criteria for livestock transportation vehicles, space and ventilation requirements, livestock classes to be separated, and length of travel.

Guidelines to assist in the decision to transport an animal are available at [www.livestockwelfare.com/livestock-transport](http://www.livestockwelfare.com/livestock-transport).



## Resources for Veterinarians

### Animal Protection

- *National Link Coalition Resource Materials:* [nationallinkcoalition.org/resources/articles-research#TOOLS](http://nationallinkcoalition.org/resources/articles-research#TOOLS)
- *Recognizing Animal Abuse (from the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association):* [www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-advocacy/recognizing-abuse](http://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-advocacy/recognizing-abuse)
- *Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association Animal Welfare Resources:* [www.svma.sk.ca/index.php?p=animal-welfare](http://www.svma.sk.ca/index.php?p=animal-welfare)

### Government

- *Agriculture Knowledge Center:* 1-866-457-2377
- *Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA):* 306-780-5180 (Saskatchewan Office) or [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)
- *Chief Veterinarian Office, Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture:* 306-787-2150. The Ministry of Agriculture's Animal Health and Welfare page also provides information about animal welfare ([www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/livestock/animal-health-and-welfare](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/livestock/animal-health-and-welfare)).
- *Farm Stress Line (Mobile Crisis Centre):* 1-800-667-4442 or [www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/programs-and-services/farm-stress-line](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/programs-and-services/farm-stress-line)
- *Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture Regional Offices:* [www.saskatchewan.ca/ag-regional-offices](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/ag-regional-offices)

## Human Services

- 211 Saskatchewan's list of links: [sk.211.ca](http://sk.211.ca)

## Industry

- *Chicken Farmers of Saskatchewan*: 306-242-3611 or [www.saskatchewanchicken.ca](http://www.saskatchewanchicken.ca)
- *Farm and Food Care Saskatchewan*: Represents the livestock and poultry industries regarding animal care issues. They can be reached at 306-477-FOOD (3663) or [www.farmfoodcaresk.org](http://www.farmfoodcaresk.org)
- *Saskatchewan Bison Association*: 306- 585-6304 or [www.canadianbison.ca/producer/The\\_CBA/SaskatchewanBisonAssociation.htm](http://www.canadianbison.ca/producer/The_CBA/SaskatchewanBisonAssociation.htm)
- *Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association*: 306-585-2333 or [www.saskbeef.com](http://www.saskbeef.com)
- *Saskatchewan Cervid Alliance*: [www.saskatchewancervidalliance.com](http://www.saskatchewancervidalliance.com)
- *Saskatchewan Egg Producers*: 306-924-1505 or [www.saskegg.ca](http://www.saskegg.ca)
- *Saskatchewan Horse Federation*: 306-780-9449 or [www.saskhorse.ca](http://www.saskhorse.ca)
- *Sask Milk*: 306-949-6999 or [www.saskmilk.ca](http://www.saskmilk.ca)
- *Sask Pork*: 306-244-7752 or [www.saskpork.com/index.cfm](http://www.saskpork.com/index.cfm)
- *Saskatchewan Sheep Board*: 306-933-5200 or [www.sksheep.com](http://www.sksheep.com)
- *Saskatchewan Stock Growers*: 306-757-8523 or [www.skstockgrowers.com](http://www.skstockgrowers.com)
- *Turkey Farmers of Saskatchewan*: 306-931-1050 or [www.saskturkey.com](http://www.saskturkey.com)

## Veterinary

- *Disease Investigation Unit (DIU), WCVN Large Animal Clinic*: 306-966-7178
- *Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association (SVMA)*: 306-955-7862, [svma@svma.sk.ca](mailto:svma@svma.sk.ca) or [www.svma.sk.ca](http://www.svma.sk.ca)
- *Veterinary Social Work, WCVN*: 306-966-2852 or [www.usask.ca/vmc/services/social-work.php](http://www.usask.ca/vmc/services/social-work.php)
- *Veterinary Forensics' list of links*: <http://www.veterinaryforensics.com/links/>

# Preparing the Veterinarian to Respond to Suspected Animal Cruelty

A central green circle is surrounded by five white circles, each with a green border. A horizontal dotted line separates this section from the one below.

## Know how to identify animal abuse or neglect

An animal can be neglected even if a person does not intend to cause distress

The inability to pay for treatment is not a legal excuse for permitting an animal to remain in distress

Watch for red flags, such as a history of high animal turnover, or repetitive or preventable injuries

Attend training and know *The Animal Protection Act* and Codes of Practice

Veterinarian reports suspected abuse, Animal Protection Officer determines if there is abuse or neglect

A central green circle is surrounded by five white circles, each with a green border.

## Know who to call

*See contact information on page 22*

Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan

Police/RCMP

Saskatoon SPCA

Prince Albert SPCA

Regina Humane Society



Practice compassion  
and education with  
clients

Define staff roles and  
have them trained

Develop an  
internal decision-  
making process  
for your animal  
care team

Develop a client  
questionnaire

Develop a standard  
operating procedure  
for reporting animal  
cruelty

A statement  
indicating why you  
believe the animal is  
in distress

Ask for, validate,  
document and  
report owner's  
contact information

Written record of all  
communication with  
the client

Full documentation  
of physical exam,  
including photos, if  
possible

Collect  
evidence,  
records and  
documents

Demeanor of the  
owner, as well as the  
animal



## Saskatchewan Animal Protection Agencies

### Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan

- 306-382-0002 or 1-844-382-0002
- [info@animalprotectionservices.ca](mailto:info@animalprotectionservices.ca)
- [www.animalprotectionservices.ca](http://www.animalprotectionservices.ca)

### Prince Albert SPCA

- 306-763-6110
- [pa.sPCA@sasktel.net](mailto:pa.sPCA@sasktel.net)
- [www.princealbertspca.com](http://www.princealbertspca.com)

### Regina Humane Society

- 306-543-6363
- Animal protection: 306-777-7700
- [lkoch@reginahumane.ca](mailto:lkoch@reginahumane.ca)
- [www.reginahumanesociety.ca](http://www.reginahumanesociety.ca)

### Saskatoon SPCA

- 306-374-7387
- [ed@saskatoonsPCA.com](mailto:ed@saskatoonsPCA.com)
- [www.saskatoonsPCA.com](http://www.saskatoonsPCA.com)

## Notes

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