



10 THINGS

People sometimes don't realize are cruel to animals

Saskatchewan's Animal Protection Act (APA) says that "no person shall cause an animal to be in distress" and that "no person responsible for an animal shall cause or permit the animal to be or continue to be in distress". The APA defines an animal in distress as:

- (a) deprived of adequate food, water, care or shelter;
- (b) injured, sick, in pain or suffering; or
- (c) abused or neglected"

and then makes exceptions for commonly accepted practices. Animal Protection Act offences are offences of strict liability, meaning that there is no need to prove there was intent to cause the distress.

Unfortunately, we see the following things regularly, because they are frequently not recognized as animal cruelty. All photos are from cases where the owners were convicted under the Animal Protection Act, and therefore are a matter of public record.

1. Emaciated condition

Lack of feed that leads to death is obvious cruelty, and should never be excused. Animals can also be malnourished without dying, and this is also a serious problem. Allowing any animal to reach or remain in an emaciated condition because of inadequate quantity or quality of feed is not acceptable. It is also not acceptable to allow animals to be malnourished due to conditions that interfere with eating – the condition must be corrected, or the animal must be fed in such a way that it can maintain condition.

2. Overgrown hooves

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines says, "Hooves must be trimmed and/or shod as often as is necessary to maintain hooves in functional condition. Whether shod or unshod, hooves must not be allowed to grow to excessive lengths causing injury or discomfort to the horse."

Unfortunately, we see a number of cases each year where equine hooves have been allowed to grow so long that they curl up or otherwise impede walking. This is not acceptable as it causes unnecessary pain and discomfort. Owners must keep the hooves of all equines, or other hooved animals, in reasonable condition. The expense or limited availability of a farrier is not an excuse for this type of neglect.

3. Lack of grooming

Matted hair causes pain and discomfort, and is therefore considered distress. We have prosecuted people for allowing dogs to become extremely matted, as it is the owner's responsibility to provide suitable grooming for their animals in order to prevent unnecessary pain. Lack of appropriate grooming can lead to distress in many species, not just dogs and cats!

4. Untreated injuries

It is an offence for an owner to allow an animal to remain in distress; therefore withholding treatment (or humane euthanasia if treatment is not an option) for injuries is definitely animal cruelty. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for us to see injured animals that the owners think will get better on their own, or where the owner simply underestimates the pain that the animal is experiencing. A broken leg may heal eventually, but the animal will have suffered considerably in the meantime.

5. Untreated illness or infection

Like an untreated injury, an untreated illness can mean that an animal has remained in distress. Owners must provide their animals with appropriate care for all illnesses, generally in consultation with a veterinarian. Sometimes there isn't a reasonable likelihood of recovery, or treatment fails, in which case the animal should be humanely euthanized in order to relieve it of its suffering.

6. Abandonment

Animals must be provided with appropriate care at all times, which includes adequate supervision. Leaving domestic animals to fend for themselves after a move, or for extended periods while on holiday, is never appropriate. Owners must make arrangements to take their animals with them, find them new homes, or surrender them to a humane society, arrange a caretaker, or otherwise ensure that they are not in distress.

7. Inadequate shelter

Provision of adequate shelter is a requirement of the Animal Protection Act. While "adequate" can be difficult to define, and will vary somewhat between species and even type of animal (adequate shelter for a Malamute and a Chihuahua will be different), it is important that animals have appropriate shelter from the elements. Shelter concerns can also include conditions of squalor for domestic animals, or lack of access to wind breaks or dry areas for livestock.

8. Physical abuse

Physical abuse of animals can be difficult to prove in court unless it is so extreme that the animal is injured. However, it is important that people understand that there is a limit to the reasonable amount of force or correction that can be used in the name of animal training; at some point, "correction" becomes a beating inflicting unnecessary pain, and thus abuse.

9. Inappropriate confinement

Animals are routinely confined for safety, transportation, etc, and this is not an offence if it is done in an appropriate manner. However, extended confinement of companion animals in small cages that are designed for temporary holding causes those animals distress and should not be excused. We have, unfortunately, seen a case where a very large number of dogs were confined to crates for at least 23.5 hours of the day, but were physically healthy. For confined livestock, approved stocking densities or cage sizes must be maintained in order to comply with the appropriate Code of Practice.

10. Lack of water

All animals have a requirement for water, and they must be provided with water of sufficient quantity and quality to meet their needs. We cannot require that animals have 24/7 access to water, but if we find them in a dehydrated or thirsty state, we can charge the owner with allowing their animal to be in distress. Water access can be particularly challenging during Saskatchewan's long/cold winters. Owners MUST take appropriate steps to ensure that all animals have sufficient water to meet their needs, regardless of the weather conditions. ❗

To report a concern about neglected or abused animals outside of the cities of Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert or Moose Jaw, or for more information, please contact Animal Protection Services of Saskatchewan at (306) 382-0002 or info@animalprotectionservices.ca.