

**TRACS**

*The Responsible  
Animal Care Society*

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**aim**

**animal issues  
magazine**

## Creating Compassionate Communities



Cover photo:

**"In loving memory of dear little SuzyBear"**

By James Stuparyk, Winnipeg, Manitoba

*In place of our usual President's Message, we bring you an important article below. Elli's message is timely in the sense that gift-buying practices during the holiday season should include awareness of products on the market that contain a hidden element: cruelty.*

## **DOG AND CAT FUR MAY BE LEGALLY SOLD IN A STORE NEAR YOU**

As stated by the Fur-Bearer Defenders ([www.banlegholdtraps.com](http://www.banlegholdtraps.com)): "It is legal to bring dog and cat fur into Canada – and sell it in a store near you." In our society, we value cats and dogs as our companions; we love them, care for them and develop strong bonds with these animals. For us it is unimaginable to kill these creatures for the purpose of trade and commerce. Yet, in China and other Asian countries, dogs and cats are killed under the most horrendous conditions, to supply a huge worldwide market for their fur and hide.

The Humane Society of the United States (International) has conducted undercover investigations since 1997 and their findings, including video footage, have been widely reported; their fight to have this despicable trade banned internationally is still ongoing. The organization has been instrumental in affecting a ban on the pet fur trade in several countries, including the United States. "As foreign markets close their doors to dog and cat fur, Canada will become an even more appealing market for individuals looking to profit from this cruelty" (Fur-Bearer Defenders).

The slaughter of dogs and cats is brutal. Thailand is one of several countries that has large compound where the animals are delivered to, or raised in conditions difficult to explain or believe. Investigators documented the killing of an estimated 30,000 dogs in one month; graphic footage captured showed some dogs still moving their tails just before their throats were cut. An especially gruesome twist to this is that bits of skin from brutally slaughtered dogs are mixed up with other skin sources to produce rawhide chew treats for pet dogs.

Obviously individuals are not able to halt the bizarre, reprehensible pet fur and skin trade, but there are many opportunities for concerned citizens to add their voice to the growing awareness of this abhorrent practice. Most of all, for companion animal owners, do not purchase any pet food; chew toys, etc. produced in Asian Pacific countries. Read labels, and purchase only products MADE IN CANADA. Some labeling is misleading, but with practice, it is possible to identify where products for our companions are produced.

For those of us who have internet access, it is easy to get information on the pet fur/skin trade. But it is also important to find the most reliable sources for this. The HSUS/HSI and Fur-Bearer Defenders are organizations that are trustworthy and who give the most accurate information available.

To quote Mahatma Gandhi: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated".

-- Elli Kohnert

### **TRACS Directors**

*President:* Sinikka Crosland

*Vice-President:* Lorraine Devost

*Secretary-Treasurer:* Louise Adams

*Director of Nutrition & Food Animal Issues:* Brenda Davis

*Director of Publicity & Promotions:* Anna Crosland

## CREATING COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES

As news of their plight made national headlines, Kelowna's feral rabbits at risk touched the hearts of animal defenders on networks around the world. These sweet, personable cotton-tailed bundles of energetic innocence somehow managed to hop their way into conversations far-removed from the city streets where they had made their home. In addition, they have gnawed at the grim walls of government bureaucracy, sending ripples of unrest throughout various offices and threatening to impact upon city politics. The system's attempts to defend itself and to deny compassion only resulted in an even stronger groundswell of protest as more and more citizens stepped forward to protect the animals that they felt were being victimized by the City of Kelowna.

### *Why have rabbits been capable of achieving such a tidal wave of support?*

"Because they're cute," claim some skeptics. Sure, bunnies are cute. But is that the only reason...or, as Mahatma Gandhi phrased it, have people come to realize that it is possible, indeed, to "be the change you wish to see in the world"? Can rabbits be considered ambassadors for change, an embodiment of what is pure, innocent, and worthy of protection? In contrast, the City of Kelowna has not exactly come out smelling like a rose. Their hired contractor and his daughter were caught stomping a rabbit wounded by pellet fire. Nursing female rabbits have been live-trapped and taken away from their dependent young to be killed. At the time of this writing, the contractor is developing the ultimate killing box for rabbits—one that will immobilize and restrain so that a metal bolt can be shot through the victim's skull. This decision was made after the embarrassment of the shooting and stomping incident and because the lethal injection strategy was fraught with complications.

Strange that bureaucracy tends to seek destructive solutions, whereas the ways of compassion include a healthy respect for life. To date, the City of Kelowna has not provided a penny for non-lethal management of the rabbits, yet their contractor will receive \$54,000 for management that included stomping cruelty and will give rise to a new killing tool. A growing humane movement rails against the injustice of this as well as other insensitive decisions made only for reasons of expediency and adherence to rigid protocol. We are left to wonder whether City Council would ever have voted to hire EBB in the first place had they realized the direction that City Parks' rabbit management program was to take. In hindsight, would they have chosen the non-lethal strategies offered by humane groups?\*

It is chilling to think that government offices may actually be contributing to victimization, impacting attitudes of people in the community. A "let's kill" agenda certainly sends a message down the ladder to those who are open to listening. If city officials condone taking innocent lives, it may seem fitting for a certain sector of society to turn their dogs loose on rabbits or to beat them to death with baseball bats (actual cases that TRACS has documented in a police file). It is not difficult for these individuals to later take their problems out on other animals such as cats and dogs. Some offenders can progress to harming people. Much has been written about the "violence link" and how cruelty to animals and abuse of people can be intertwined. See [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)

***How can we stop the cycle of abuse at all levels?***

We can begin *by not accepting it*. Cases of cruelty to animals should be taken seriously in any community by enforcement agencies as well as by members of the public, who are often in a position to witness and report. City officials need to be discouraged from accepting and promoting cruelty to animals that may exist in the form of “standard practices”. For instance, when humane, non-lethal solutions are available, there is simply no excuse for the rabbit-killing methods condoned by the City of Kelowna.

On a federal level, our antiquated animal cruelty statutes need to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Humane groups have been working hard to convince our political leaders that the laws governing animals must do more to protect them. Visit [www.cfhs.ca](http://www.cfhs.ca) to read about recent efforts to bring about new legislation and to find out how you can help.

Most responsible individuals know what constitutes good care of companion animals—nutritious food, access to fresh water, adequate shelter, veterinary checkups and sterilization, good grooming, and socialization. We are troubled by images of starving horses, injured stray cats, and the backyard dog left chained for hours with little stimulation or human contact. But what can *you* do to turn your compassion into action?

Be willing to document and report on an abuse or neglect situation you have witnessed. Remember that *you* may be the only chance for a better life that a victimized animal may have. Action might involve taking a photograph or conducting a videotaping if it is possible to do so without putting yourself at risk. Evidence should be turned over to the SPCA, along with a written statement documenting what you have seen. If you cannot reach the SPCA, ask the RCMP for assistance. You can also call TRACS, and we will advise you of steps you can take to help. An added bonus is our reward program, SAVE (Stop Animal Violence Early), that will pay out \$1500 to any citizen who provides evidence leading to the successful conviction of an animal abuser.

Would you like to help in a hands-on way? Consider fostering a needy animal. TRACS welcomes additions to our foster list. We are also looking for people to help build pens for rabbits. Or are you a landowner with property to share? Do you have a secure barn or outbuilding that could house animals at risk? Call TRACS!

Above all, shine your light in the community! Help where you can, and others will follow your lead.

***The animals need you.***

***Be the change you wish to see...in your own part of the world.***

\*For background information on how Kelowna City Council was misled by City staff, please visit: [www.tracs-bc.ca/bundeathsquads](http://www.tracs-bc.ca/bundeathsquads). If you do not have computer access, feel free to phone TRACS and we will send you information on this in hard copy.

## **Straight Talk about Kelowna's Feral Rabbits Who's Doing What and How You Can Help**

### **Background Information**

Since TRACS launched our Feral Rabbit Rescue Program on March 1, 2008, we have removed nearly 400 rabbits off Kelowna streets. Many have been caught by our humane trappers, and others have been surrendered to us by concerned citizens. EBB Environmental Consulting, hired by the City of Kelowna, has killed approximately the same number of rabbits as TRACS has salvaged, handing only a small number to rescue groups (32 at the time of this writing). TRACS has received nothing from the city for our ongoing service to the community, whereas EBB will earn \$54,000 for one year.

On September 27, 2008, a Kelowna security guard caught an EBB employee and his daughter stomping a rabbit wounded by pellet fire. Although the city immediately called a stop to the shooting and stomping, an official from Parks suggested clubbing as an option for wounded rabbits. They then proceeded to permit live-trapping by the *same* retired police officer who committed the stomping cruelty. Next, EBB entertained the idea of killing rabbits by lethal injection. TRACS sent letters to the city, copying the SPCA and the media and asking for qualifications on the person who would be injecting the rabbits. We were informed by Ian Wilson of City Parks that EBB employees had "provincial certification" to do this, but no other information was ever given to us despite our persistent queries.

Suddenly, the City's rabbit control program changed gears *again*. At this time, they are preparing to kill rabbits via the penetrating captive bolt method. When questioned about this strategy by an animal defender, EBB revealed that they are preparing a killing box that will immobilize each victim before a metal bolt is applied to the brain.

### **Summary of Big Mistakes, Animal Cruelty, and Cover-Ups**

- At the onset (when EBB was hired), Kelowna City Parks declared that the rabbits would be dealt with in three ways: given to rescue groups (this was listed first), killed by lethal injection, or shot. Without warning, option number three was launched first.
- The EBB shooter and his daughter were caught red-handed stomping a wounded rabbit (when shooting had wounded but did not kill the animal). How many other rabbits had to die this way?
- Under pressure, the City called off the shooting and stomping, but a Parks official suggested that clubbing wounded rabbits might become the strategy of choice. This was mentioned on CHBC news on September 30, 2008.
- Under more pressure from the public, City Parks opted for live-trapping instead. No funds were offered to rescue organizations from the City or EBB, so the numbers of rabbits given to these groups have been predictably small. What would it take to do the right thing and grant some money to these groups for humane, non-lethal intervention?
- The next bright idea was lethal injection. Since rabbits killed this way could not be fed to animals at wildlife centres, the City scrapped this idea. They were also subjected to intense questioning from TRACS and the public regarding the expertise of the person who would be giving the injections.

- The penetrating captive bolt is the current strategy of choice. A kill box is being created for this purpose so that terrified, struggling rabbits can be immobilized within the box and shot through the brain with a metal rod. EBB claims that this method can be humane. They are forgetting that the blood-splattered box will not exactly be inviting for any rabbits restrained within its four walls. Terror will prevail, and rabbits will understandably struggle for their lives. ***All this during the Christmas season, when peace on earth should prevail.***
- The person live-trapping the rabbits is the very same retired police officer who was caught rabbit-stomping with his daughter. What's wrong with this picture?
- Despite repeated queries from TRACS, EBB would not reveal what they are doing with nursing female rabbits. They insisted that dependent babies in warrens were not an issue in the fall and winter months. Interestingly enough, EBB dropped off two pregnant female rabbits to the SPCA in late November, and these animals gave birth in the shelter. It would appear that EBB's general knowledge about rabbits and their understanding regarding humane animal management is seriously lacking.

### **What Can You Do for the Rabbits?**

Concerned citizens in Kelowna and beyond have already achieved major strides through their letters, e-mails and phone calls. EBB and City Parks are jumping frantically through one hoop after another, trying in desperation to find a way to kill rabbits that will be humane and acceptable to the public. *But they are forgetting one thing—The Right Thing.* TRACS and our team of donors and supporters are living proof of the power of love and compassion. *Together we have helped nearly as many rabbits as EBB has slain.*

Kelowna has a newly sworn-in Council. Please ask them to stop the killing and re-evaluate the Feral Rabbit Control Program without delay. Humane, non-lethal methods must be employed!

#### ***Contact information:***

Mayor Sharon Shepherd and Council  
City of Kelowna  
1435 Water Street  
Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 1J4  
Phone: 250-469-8687  
Fax: 250-862-3399  
E-mail: [mayorandcouncil@kelowna.ca](mailto:mayorandcouncil@kelowna.ca)

Ian Wilson, Urban Forestry Supervisor  
Parks Office  
1359 K.L.O. Road  
Kelowna, B.C. V1W 3N8  
Phone: 250-717-2757  
Fax: 250-862-3335  
E-mail: [IWilson@kelowna.ca](mailto:IWilson@kelowna.ca)

Oliver Busby - EBB Environmental Consulting  
P.O. Box 18180 1215c 56th Street  
Delta, BC V4L 2M4  
Office: 604-943-3209 Toll Free: 1-877-943-3209 Fax: 604-948-3273  
[Enquiry@ebbconsulting.ca](mailto:Enquiry@ebbconsulting.ca)

The City of Kelowna recently enacted a bylaw prohibiting the sale of unsterilized rabbits. Any violations should be reported to:

Bylaw Enforcement  
City of Kelowna  
1435 Water Street  
Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 1J4 Phone: 250-469-8686

## Shocking Statistics

The City of Kelowna's hired contractor has killed 400 feral rabbits to date. Rescue groups have salvaged approximately the same number of rabbits and are placing them in foster homes and sanctuaries.

Here are just a few samples of the happy faces of rabbits saved by TRACS



Can't help it if I'm cute



Nope – wasn't me



Wasn't me either



Just hangin out



"And this is how you toss the salad"



It isn't easy being short



Bunny Bootcamp

## Parsley Power!



Photo Credits:  
Jenny Hildebrand & Chantelle Devost

## WISH LIST

### **For our Feral Rabbit Rescue Program:**

- Volunteers with handyman skills to build bunny pens
- Volunteers to help clean pens
- Foster homes
- Land owners willing to provide space and TLC for rabbits in large pens; anyone out there with a large, secure barn that is not being used?
- Donations of hay, bunny pellets, building materials and funding.

### **For needy dogs, cats, and other animals:**

- Foster homes
- Food
- Kitty litter and
- Cash donations

*Never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way. ~~ Martin Luther King, Jr.*



### **Blenz Cares: Fundraising for the Animals**

If you enjoy coffee and tea, or include coffee/tea in your gift-giving, Blenz Coffee Company has launched a new initiative to support charities. It's as simple as ordering the products you want online, and delivery will be straight to your door! Almost 50% of the total cost of your purchases will go to TRACS when you identify TRACS as the charity of your choice.

We are pleased to note that Blenz has an organic, fair trade and bird friendly type of coffee: Machu Picchu Blend. Go to [www.blenzcares.com](http://www.blenzcares.com) and order the products you would like from the left sidebar before proceeding to checkout.

Thanks so much...from the animals!

### ***TRACS Fundraising Team***

The TRACS fundraising team has managed to raise over \$16,000 since June 2008 thanks to your compassion and support.

Events have included car washes, a bake sale and a fun loving evening with D.R. Elvis, a local Elvis impersonator, which was held at Dakoda's sports bar.

The Sponsor a Bunny program is still underway and can be found on our website [www.tracs-bc.ca](http://www.tracs-bc.ca), where you can watch the bunny of your choice make his or her way to the sanctuary with every donation that comes in.

Currently the team is selling **2009 Rabbits of Kelowna Calendars**. These calendars feature Rabbits of Kelowna who have been saved and now live fun filled lives at one of our foster homes or sanctuaries. Calendars are \$15 with all proceeds going directly to the rabbits. Calendars be purchased by calling 250-768-4803 or emailing [tracs@shaw.ca](mailto:tracs@shaw.ca)

TRACS has also branched out from feral bunnies to feral cats and is holding a raffle with all proceeds going to this new program. Tickets are just \$2 each. Prizes are 4 gift baskets ranging in value from \$50 to \$220. Draw date is December 22<sup>nd</sup> so get your tickets soon!

To purchase raffle tickets contact us at: 250-768-4803 or e-mail [tracs@shaw.ca](mailto:tracs@shaw.ca)

***Great cause, beautiful items!***

## UPCOMING EVENT!

### Okanagan Health Forum Public Event

The Okanagan Health Forum is an exceptional educational event open to the general public. Featured speakers in the 2009 forum include Dr. Neal Barnard, founder and president of the Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine, and author of 14 ground-breaking books, and Dr. Ron Cridland, founder and director of the Kelowna Sleep Clinic.

TRACS supports the Okanagan Health Forum and its healthy, humane message. Dr. Barnard and the PCRM have long promoted the benefits of wholesome plant-based eating—excellent for human health and good for the animals, too!

**Tuesday, March 10, 2009**

6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Community Centre Cleland Theatre  
Penticton

**Wednesday, March 11, 2009**

6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Kelowna Community Theatre  
Kelowna

Mark your calendars – this is an event you will not want to miss. We fully expect a sell-out crowd. For more information, please visit: [www.okanaganhealthforum.com](http://www.okanaganhealthforum.com).

#### Message Board

We are very grateful for the generosity and kindness of two very special young people, **Erin Loukras & Rochelle Hoffman**, who donated their birthday money to help the bunnies. *Happy Birthday, Erin and Rochelle!*

#### Join TRACS....

Help us continue our crucial work for the animals  
Become a member and receive our quarterly newsletter.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I am enclosing the following (please check):

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 for Individual Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 for Family Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: TRACS, P.O. Box 26097, Westbank, B.C. V4T-2G3 Canada

*Thanks from the animals!*

## **Visions of Carrots**

*'Twas the night before Christmas and all thru the pen  
Not a creature was stirring but a little bunny named Ben*

*Covered with hay the babies snuggled in their hutch  
Dancing thru their heads visions of carrots, parsley and such*

*When up on the roof there arose such a clatter  
Lil Ben volunteered to see what was the matter*

*By his bright red suspenders Santa hung from the roof  
Took a wrong step and fell thru the snowy wire with a poof*

*Santa smiled at Ben and said, "Hi Little Bunny"  
"I'm in a bit of a bind and yes, it is kind of funny"*

*At Santa's request Ben woke the other bunnies  
They yawned and they stretched and looked at him funny*

*With their heads cocked sideways, they listened to Santa explain  
He wanted to become some kind of airplane?*

*They formed a big circle around where Santa hung  
They counted to 3 and then they all sprung*

*They reached up and latched onto Santa's red suit  
Ben grabbed a hold of Santa's Big Black Boot*

*Just as they landed back down on the ground  
They all let go, hoping for a big rebound*

*This sent Santa sailing thru the hole in the roof  
They didn't think it would work but here was the proof*

*They had stretched Santa's suspenders by pulling on his suit  
Sent him flying thru the air losing one boot*

*He landed in his sleigh, upright on his feet  
His boot landing beside him on the driver's seat*

*Thru the hole in the roof he thanked all the bunnies  
Then left loads of carrots and parsley to fill all their tummies*

*Santa pulled on his boot and straightened his hat  
It had stayed on his head, can you imagine that?*

*Then over the pen Santa made one more flight  
Merry Christmas to all and to all a Good Night!*

Jenny Hildebrand



*Wishing you a very Merry Christmas  
And a happy and prosperous New Year  
**TRACS** and all the animals would  
Like to express our Thanks for all your  
Support in the past year!  
You are all angels to the animals*



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