

KINDNESS STOPS CRUELTY

If we are a dignified, compassionate species, why then does cruelty exist?

Cruelty occurs in all areas and it can be caused by people from any social group.

The majority of cruelty that the RSPCA encounters stems from ignorance. Horse owners not realising that a horse cannot live on a 1 hectare pasture with no supplementary feeding. Dog owners believing that their canine companion can survive on an all meat diet. Bird owners unaware the bird cage that is in a shady nook in the morning, is a sweltering sauna as soon as the sun moves.

However, we certainly do see ignorance based on uncaring stupidity such as the dog owner that sees no wrong in tying his dog on a heavy short chain in the sun for 24 hours a day, or the errant school children on holidays that get sadistic pleasure from torturing neighbourhood pets.

For instance, a cat was seen straying the suburbs with a crossbow bolt embedded in its skull. It took several days before the cat could be caught and treated and thankfully it survived. We had no evidence as to who shot the cat, but it was in a school holiday period. We also see an increase in cruelty at school holiday times with children inflicting pain on animals as entertainment. Their parents are usually as bad, abandoning the family pet while the family goes off for a long holiday.

Cruelty comes in a variety of sickening forms. Take the example of the dog that was doused in flammable liquid and then set alight. She suffered massive third degree burns. This animal endured tremendous suffering, but after months of treatment and a great will to live, she eventually recovered to be placed in a loving home.

Then of course, there are the countless number of horses, cattle and sheep we see each year that are kept in poor paddocks with no water and forage to sustain their body weight. These are not livestock on drought affected cattle stations, they are domestic horses and cattle in paddocks near homes. The owners would have every opportunity to purchase supplementary feed for their animals but so often do not bother.

Where evidence exists, the RSPCA will prosecute the perpetrators of cruelty.

Many RSPCA investigations lead to Court action and it is rare for an RSPCA cruelty case not to end in a successful prosecution.

There are numerous offences that are specifically regarded as being cruel under the guidelines of the "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1985".

For instance, it is an offence to leave a dog continually and habitually tied on a chain. Dogs must be released for at least two hours in every twenty four.

Naturally it is also an offence to fail to provide an animal with a sufficient supply of suitable food and water.

Docking the tail of a horse, cropping the ears of a dog or operating on a dog to prevent it from barking are also specified as acts of cruelty.

In addition, using live animals as a lure to assist in the training of greyhounds (i.e. bleeding) or the keeping of animals for the purpose of bleeding of greyhounds is an offence of cruelty.

Preventing cruelty is not easy. The RSPCA uses two methods.

Firstly, the prosecution of offenders. Through successful legal action people are forced to realise the seriousness of their offences, and, hopefully, will not repeat the offence. Simultaneously, the publicity that acts of cruelty receive impresses upon other animal owners the need for humane animal treatment.

Secondly, the education of people in all walks of life regarding the essentials of responsible animal ownership and care is of prime importance. For this reason, the RSPCA has for many years been operating an education campaign to inform children and adults about animal care and owner responsibility.

A major component of the education of children is the Junior Membership section of the RSPCA. Junior membership is open to all children up to the age of 18 years after which it is hoped that they will transfer to adult membership to continue their association with the RSPCA.

The majority of people are dignified, compassionate and caring human beings. Through the actions of the RSPCA, it is hoped that their numbers prosper.

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