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SPCA removes animals from home

Friday June 19 2009

BY HEATHER ABREY, ENTERPRISE STAFF

Caledon OPP officers and the OSPCA attended a residence in Caledon Village on Tuesday, June 16 at 10:30 a.m. to investigate concerns about animal welfare.

"The officers were called by the SPCA to keep the peace while the SPCA was investigating a residence on Highway 10 regarding the welfare of the animals," explained Caledon OPP Constable Jonathan Beckett.

"We did attend the property yesterday morning with a warrant," confirmed Kristen Williams, OSPCA public relations manager. "We were responding to a number of complaints we had received concerning an odour coming from the house. We found 11 dogs and three cats in distress."

All of the dogs were full-grown Briards, a large breed of fluffy French sheepdogs. "They are very large; they look like small bears," said Williams. "They're a high maintenance breed from a grooming perspective and they were very matted and very dirty when they found them."

Two Persian cats and one Domestic Short Hair were also found in the home.

"The animals are currently in our care receiving some medical attention," said Williams. "They are seized at this time, so they still belong to the owner, but we are considering charges."

Town of Caledon by-laws limit the number of dogs in a house to three and require that they all be licensed.



An SPCA handler removes a Briard sheep dog from a Caledon Village residence Tuesday.

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In March the Ontario government amended Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, to broaden protection for all animals.

"It used to be that there were only provincial offences for animals that were kept for breeding or for sale, but now they are for all animals," said Williams. Changes to the act included establishing new provincial offences against animal cruelty, including causing or permitting distress. Judges were provided greater flexibility to impose stiffer penalties, according to the OSPCA website, which can range from jail time, fines up to \$60,000 and a potential lifetime ban on animal ownership.

The OSPCA was granted inspection powers, allowing investigators to inspect premises where animals are kept for the purposes of exhibit, entertainment, boarding, sale or hire and allowed the society to apply for custody of animals while a case is still before the courts.

The amendment expanded the standards of care to be applicable to all animals, not just dogs and cats, and requires veterinarians to report suspected animal abuse or neglect with protection under the law. It's now an offence to train an animal to fight with another animal or to own animal fighting equipment, and to harm a law enforcement animal.

As for the animals seized in this incident, they are currently being held at the York Region branch of the OSPCA and may eventually come up for adoption.

"If they were surrendered to us, which would be voluntary on the part of the owner, or as a result of the investigation... they come into our care permanently, they would be made available for adoption."

But for now the animals are being cleaned up and cared for by the OSPCA. "They're responding well to the vet treatment and they're enjoying some time outside as we speak," said Williams.

Any concerns about animal cruelty can be reported to the OSPCA at 1-888-ONT-SPCA (1-888-668-7722) and more information can be found at www.ontariospca.ca.

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