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Humane society president welcomes euthanasia probe

OSPCA to investigate allegations of 'cruelty'

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The president of Toronto's Humane Society says he welcomes an investigation by the Ontario SPCA, hoping it will prompt a debate on euthanasia policy.

The comment comes on the heels of an announcement by the Ontario SPCA that it plans to investigate the Toronto Humane Society because of recently published allegations of animal cruelty. The newspaper articles allege the humane society permits unnecessary suffering of animals because of a restrictive euthanasia policy.

Tim Trow, president of the Toronto Humane Society, denies there is any unnecessary suffering of animals.

"The allegations are nonsense," he said. "It's ludicrous to suggest there is any impropriety. ... There is no question that this is a wonderful facility with extremely well-cared-for animals."

The Ontario SPCA announced yesterday it would be investigating the allegations of "inappropriate conduct" at the Toronto Humane Society. "This is the first allegation of cruelty that has been substantial and has come forward from so many different sources," said Kristin Williams, a spokesperson for the OSPCA, which represents 50 community organizations including the Toronto Humane Society.

Williams said the provincial body has also received a number of phone calls with similar allegations of cruelty because of the humane society's euthanasia policy. The Ontario SPCA has no choice but to investigate, she said. The board will also review the status of the Toronto Humane Society as an affiliate, she said.

The allegations raised in the newspaper articles "relate directly to the welfare of animals and as such require the Ontario SPCA to investigate," said Hugh Coghill, chief inspector for the Ontario SPCA, in a news release.

But Trow says he and his organization welcome the investigation and hope it prompts a debate on euthanasia. Thirty thousand dogs and cats in the last five years have been killed at the City of Toronto pound, he said.

"Every second animal admitted to the city pound is euthanized," Trow said. "That's too high. ... I just think there are too many and we need to figure out a way to reduce it. ... The real issue is how do we stop premature euthanasia?"

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