

## **BC SPCA Resources for Branches Animal Sheltering/Pound or Animal Control Contracts Level 3**

In response to this unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, BC SPCA will be limiting public access to animal centres across the province. This measure is being taken to reduce health risk to staff and volunteers as well as the public. The BC SPCA recognizes the essential role our services play in providing care for animals in urgent need. Most locations will continue to offer reduced public services by appointment only, including adoptions in order to move animals out of animal centres and into homes.

In light of these measures, all non-essential services will cease and branches are operating at a reduced animal holding capacity. Depending on staff resources and community risk, temporary closure of some branches are possible in the coming days and weeks. We may begin to see an increase in vulnerable animals in our communities and with our limited resources, it will be vital that efficient flow through of animals in our animal centres continues.

### **A. BC SPCA Facilities with Animal Pound/ Contract(s)**

As intake in some BC SPCA branches is under a contractual obligation with municipalities, discussions need to take place immediately between branch managers and their municipal counterparts to advise of our resources and current plan for stray, injured and dangerous animals. Municipalities need to know our current plan:

1. BC SPCA is restricting public access to our branches except for emergent or essential services to protect the public, staff, volunteers and ensure we continue to provide our high welfare standard to animals in our care that truly require it.
2. Adoptions, redemptions and emergency surrenders will be accepted by appointment only.
3. The animal centre will continue to support the community with telephone and email inquiries.
4. Priority will be given to animals that are truly vulnerable (injured, sick, suffering or abandoned) and/or are a safety risk to themselves or the public
5. Surrender requests will not be accepted unless the animal truly has nowhere to go and will suffer if left in their current situation.
6. Cats that are “stray” who are in good body condition, and appear healthy will have delayed intake at the animal centre. These cats are likely community cats that are thriving in their current environment and have support from residents in the area. BC SPCA resources are to be prioritized for cats that appear injured or sick. Officers or members of the public will be asked to leave healthy cats in place or care for them themselves in the community during this time when our resources are limited.
7. Where possible, finders of animals that are healthy, will be asked to foster the stray animal. Intake exams will be completed at the animal centre and the finder will become a foster for the BC SPCA until

the owner is located, or the animal is ready for adoption. All foster protocols will apply to ensure the finder is provided with the support they require.

8. Where safe to do so, and agreeable with the finder and animal owner, BC SPCA stray animal redemption paperwork can be completed with an owner over the phone, fax and internet and the owner can claim directly from the finders home.
9. Where required by contract, dogs with dangerous behaviour will be accepted for intake to ensure public safety. However, if appropriate, containment at the owner's home with safety precautions in place is preferred.
10. Ask municipal officers to follow the below *Animal Control Officer Guidelines*

## **B. Animal Control Contracts – BC SPCA officers in the field**

For the safety of our officers and the public they serve, all officers need to take to extra measures to mitigate the short and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include protecting themselves properly to reduce risk of spreading the virus, as well as working to manage and minimize the number of new animals entering our animal centres.

As members of the public safety community, Animal Control Officers have an obligation to continue to respond to the emergency needs of our community (animals and people). To that end, at this time officers need to continue to provide the public with support but prioritize responding to:

- Dangerous and aggressive dogs
- Bite complaints
- Injured or sick stray animals
- Requests for support for other law enforcement assistance.

Requests for attendance to nuisance calls (eg. barking) and non-emergency complaints (eg. stray animals) should be prioritized depending on severity but should be completed as time permits or when safe to do so based on COVID-19 community status.

### **Animal Control Officer Guidelines**

These guidelines are recommended for Municipal officers and must be followed by BC SPCA Animal Control Officers.

1. Trace identification on all animals in the field and reunite the stray animal with their owner without bringing those animals to the animal centre.
  - a. Should an animal reunited with their owner have an ongoing welfare concern, the officer can report the information to the Provincial Call Centre for follow up by a CID officer after the redemption at the animal's home is completed.

- b. If it is apparent through the behaviour of the dog, neighbour reports or through dog licensing systems, that a dog is stray outside their home, try to contain that animal with a neighbour or in the owner's backyard as it is deemed safe to do so.
  - c. Should the municipality be concerned about loss of revenue for redemption fees, you can suggest they consider other methods of revenue generation per their own protocols (such as ticketing).
2. Only bring healthy animals that cannot be reunited with their owner due to lack of traceable identification to the animal centre.
3. Officers can send a picture of a cat in the community to animal centre staff, if the officer is unsure if the cat requires intervention, or removal from the community. Officers should do this prior to impounding the cat and leaving the area.
4. Officers must call the branch before bringing an animal to the animal centre. This is to ensure that staffing resources are available for the intake of the animal, and the officer can be notified if there is an active COVID-19 health concern at the branch that could prevent their physical entry.
5. Report branch exposure by any staff that may be suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infected to the Branch Manager or designate. Prevent all suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive staff from interacting with staff or animals that are coming to the branch.
6. Officer safety and personal protection:
  - Equip yourself with personal protective equipment (PPE):
    - a. Wear disposable gloves and change them often; bag them prior to disposal.
    - b. Carry alcohol wipes (e.g. Lysol) with you on your duty belt or pocket.
    - c. Have Prevail with you to use on your boots and hands.
    - d. Carry gowns, gloves, shoe covers, and cap for cases requiring a response to a location with someone who is sick or has been exposed to COVID-19.
  - Where possible, refrain from entering any premises. If this does not appear possible, ask if the home or occupants have been exposed or are affected by COVID-19 prior to entry and if this is the case, make every effort to not enter the home. If you do need to enter the home, use PPE as outlined above.
  - Regularly wipe down your workstation, doorknobs, work phone, pens, steering wheel, vehicle handles, seatbelt, and everything else that you might have used with AHP.
  - Maintain social distancing of >6ft with other people, including staff and volunteers.
  - Avoid touching your face and wash your hands regularly.
  - Do not accept paperwork or other items from a member of the public without wearing gloves.

7. Report all potential exposures or illness to your manager. Include:

- Date
- Time
- File #
- Manner of exposure
- Individuals involved

## **C. Communication with Municipal Partners**

Below are draft letters that managers can edit to provide to their municipal partners. This letter is to follow a phone call to ensure that our municipal partners are comfortable with the arrangement and any concerns can be addressed. It is vital to be collaborative in our approach and should there be concerns related to our plan that these are elevated to senior management as needed.

### **Draft for edit for BC SPCA Locations with Municipal Sheltering Contracts**

Dear:

In response to this unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, BC SPCA animal centres across the province will no longer be open to the general public during standard opening hours. As a partner in animal welfare who relies on our services we wanted to ensure you were aware of our plan. We are open to discussion and to work with you to ensure emergency needs of the community are addressed.

Closure of our branches is being done to reduce health risk to the public, as well as staff and volunteers. The BC SPCA recognizes the essential role our services play in providing care for animals in urgent need and that branches play a key role in the community. Our location will continue to offer adoption, redemption and stray intake by appointment only.

In light of our branch closure, we require all non-emergent services to cease and the animal intake at the branch to reduce, as we may become under-resourced to provide the necessary care. At this time, we want to ensure our limited resources are prioritized for the most vulnerable animals in the community.

#### **BC SPCA current plan:**

1. Adoptions, redemptions and emergency surrenders will be accepted by appointment
2. The animal centre will continue to support the community with telephone and email inquiries.
3. Our Provincial Call Centre is remaining open and our Cruelty Investigations Officers are investigating complaints in the province.
4. Priority will be given to animals that are truly vulnerable (injured, sick, suffering or abandoned) and/or are a safety risk to themselves or the public

5. Surrender requests will not be accepted unless the animal truly has nowhere to go and will suffer if left in their current situation.
6. Cats that are “stray” who are in good body condition, and are appearing healthy will have delayed intake at the animal centre. These cats are likely community cats that are thriving in their current environment and have support from residents in the area. BC SPCA resources are to be prioritized for cats that appear injured or sick. Officers, or members of the public, will be asked to leave healthy cats in their place in the community during this time while our resources are limited.
7. Where possible, finders of animals that are healthy, will be asked to foster the stray animal. Intake exams will be completed at the animal centre and the finder will become a foster for the BC SPCA until the owner is located, or the animal is ready for adoption. All BC SPCA foster resources and protocols will be provided to ensure the finder has the support they require.
8. Where safe to do so, and agreeable with the finder and animal owner, BC SPCA stray animal redemption paperwork can be completed with an owner over the phone, fax and internet and the owner can claim directly from the finders home.
9. Dogs that are aggressive or dangerous will be accepted for intake to ensure public safety. However, if appropriate, containment at the owner’s home with safety precautions in place is preferred.
10. We ask that your officers follow the guidelines below to help us ensure our resources are used for the animals in the community that need it most. As well, to ensure the safety of our branch staff as they continue to support your work.
  - Trace identification on all animals in the field and reunite the stray animal with their owner without bringing those animals to the animal centre.
    - a. Should your officer have a concern for the welfare of the animal, the officer can report the information to the Provincial Call Centre for follow up by a CID officer after the redemption at the animals home is completed.
    - b. If it is apparent through the location or behaviour of the dog, neighbour reports or through dog licensing systems, that a dog is stray outside their home, please try to contain that animal with a neighbour, or in the owners backyard as it is deemed safe to do so.
    - c. Should the municipality be concerned about loss of revenue for redemption fees, we suggest other methods of revenue generation (such as ticketing) where required.
  - Only bring healthy animals that cannot be reunited with their owner due to lack of traceable identification to the animal centre.
  - Staff welcome pictures from your officers should they be unsure if the cat requires intervention, or removal from the community. We ask that officers seek this advice prior to impounding the cat and leaving the area where the cat was found.

- We ask that officers call the branch before bringing an animal to the animal centre. This is to ensure that staffing resources are available for the intake of the animal, and the officer can be notified if there is an active COVID-19 health concern at the branch that could prevent their physical entry.
- Report branch exposure by any municipal staff that may be suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infected to the Branch Manager or designate. Further we ask that you prevent all suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive staff from interacting with staff or animals that are coming to the branch.
- As it relates to COVID-19, we recommend the following officer safety and personal protection as they interact with animals or branch staff:
  - a. Animal control officers should be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) for cases requiring a response to a location with someone who is sick or has been exposed to COVID-19.
    - 1. For these purposes, PPE includes gown, gloves, shoe covers, and cap.
- Ask if the home or occupants have been exposed or are affected by COVID-19 and provide this information to BC SPCA staff prior to bringing the animal to the branch.
- Officers should make every effort not to enter the home of anyone who is known to have been exposed to the virus.
- Keep a 6 foot distance from the public and BC SPCA staff (social distancing)
- Wipe their work phone, workstation, pens, steering wheel, vehicle handles, seatbelt and everything else they handle before and after use.
- Wash hands upon entry to the animal centre and keep hands away from faces
- Staff should be wearing disposable gloves, changing them as often as required, and disposing of them, bagged and discarded.
- Hand wipes – Lysol wipes recommended to keep some on their duty belt or pocket.
- Have a cleaning agent for boots and shoes.

Should our branch require increased safety measures such as a full branch closure due to public health requirements, we will be sure to keep you updated.

We thank you for your understanding of our preventative measures as we strive to ensure we do our part in reducing the spread and risk to staff and the public from COVID-19. Should you have any questions, please let me know as I would be happy to discuss ways for us to collaborate to ensure the community receives the support it needs during this difficult time.

**Draft for edit for BC SPCA Locations with Animal Control Contracts: (Officers in the community)**

Dear:

In response to this unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, BC SPCA animal centres across the province will be restricting access to the general public during standard opening hours. As a partner in animal welfare who relies on our services we wanted to ensure you were aware of our plan. We are open to discussion and to work with you to ensure emergency needs of the community are addressed.

Restricting access to our branches is being done to reduce health risk to the public, as well as staff and volunteers. The BC SPCA recognizes the essential role our services play in providing care for animals in urgent need and that branches play a key role in the community. Our location will continue to offer emergency response to animal control complaints, adoption, redemption and stray intake by appointment only.

In light of our branch closure, we require all non-emergent services to cease and the animal intake at the branch to reduce, as we may become under-resourced to provide the necessary care. At this time, we want to ensure our limited resources are prioritized for the most vulnerable animals in the community.

**BC SPCA current plan:**

1. Adoptions, redemptions and emergency surrenders will be accepted by appointment
2. The animal centre will continue to support the community with telephone and email inquiries.
3. Our Provincial Call Centre is remaining open and our Cruelty Investigations Officers are investigating complaints in the province.
4. Priority will be given to animals that are truly vulnerable (injured, sick, suffering or abandoned) and/or are a safety risk to themselves or the public
5. Surrender requests will not be accepted unless the animal truly has nowhere to go and will suffer if left in their current situation.
6. Cats that are “stray” who are in good body condition, and appear healthy will have delayed intake at the animal centre. These cats are likely community cats that are thriving in their current environment and have support from residents in the area. BC SPCA resources are to be prioritized for cats that appear injured or sick. Officers, or members of the public, will be asked to leave healthy cats in their place in the community during this time while our resources are limited.
7. Where possible, finders of animals that are healthy, will be asked to foster the stray animal. Intake exams will be completed at the animal centre and the finder will become a foster for the BC SPCA until the owner is located, or the animal is ready for adoption. All BC SPCA foster resources and protocols will be provided to ensure the finder has the support they require.
8. Where safe to do so, and agreeable with the finder and animal owner, BC SPCA stray animal redemption paperwork can be completed with an owner over the phone, fax and internet and the owner can claim directly from the finders home.

9. Dogs that are aggressive or dangerous will be accepted for intake to ensure public safety. However, if appropriate, containment at the owner's home with safety precautions in place is preferred.

In community:

For the safety of our officers and the public they serve, all officers are being asked to take extra measures to mitigate the short and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include protecting themselves properly to reduce risk of spreading the virus, as well as working to manage and minimize the number of new animals entering our animal centres.

As members of the public safety community, Animal Control Officers have an obligation to continue to respond to the emergency needs of the community (animals and people). To that end, at this time officers will continue to respond to call but will prioritize:

- Dangerous and aggressive dogs
- Bite complaints
- Injured or sick stray animals
- Requests for support for other law enforcement assistance.

If normally required by contract, requests for attendance to address nuisance calls (eg. barking) and non-emergency complaints (eg. stray animals) will be prioritized depending on severity, but will also be completed only as time permits or when safe to do so based on COVID-19 community status. Based on the current survival concerns by the public, all proactive initiatives will cease.

**Our officers are being asked to adhere to the following guidelines:**

1. Trace identification on all animals in the field and reunite the stray animal with their owner without bringing those animals to the animal centre.
2. Should an animals reunited with their owner have a welfare concern, the officer will report the information to the Provincial Call Centre for follow up by a CID officer after the redemption at the animals home is completed.
3. If it is apparent through the behaviour of the dog, neighbour reports or through dog licensing systems, that a dog is stray outside their home, they will try to contain that animal with a neighbour or in the owners backyard as it is deemed safe to do so.
4. Only bring healthy animals that cannot be reunited with their owner due to lack of traceable identification to the animal centre.
5. Officers must call the branch before bringing an animal to the animal centre. This is to ensure that staffing resources are available for the intake of the animal, and the officer can be notified if there is an active COVID-19 health concern at the branch that could prevent their physical entry.
6. Officer safety and personal protection:



- Animal control officers are provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) for cases requiring a response to a location with someone who is sick or has been exposed to COVID-19.
- For these purposes, PPE includes gown, gloves, shoe covers, and cap.
- Staff should be wearing disposable gloves, changing them as often as required, and disposing of them, bagged and discarded.
- Officers are to make every effort to not enter any premises but especially the home of anyone who is known to have been exposed to the virus.
- Ask if the home or occupants have been exposed or are affected by COVID-19
- Wipe down workstations, work phones, pens, steering wheels, vehicle handles, seatbelts and everything else handled before and after use.
- Maintain the recommended safe social distance of approximately six feet when speaking anyone.
- Keep hand wipes (Lysol wipes recommended) on their duty belt or in their pocket.
- Have Prevail cleaning agent for boots and hands.
- Keep their hands clean and away from their face
- Officers are not to accept paperwork or other items from a member of the public without wearing gloves.

Should our branch require increased safety measures, such as full branch closure due to public health requirements, we will be sure to keep you updated.

We thank you for your understanding of our preventative measures as we strive to ensure we do our part in reducing the spread and risk to staff and the public from COVID-19. Should you have any questions, please let me know as I would be happy to discuss ways for us to collaborate to ensure the community receives the support it needs during this difficult time.