

HUMANE SOCIETY of CANADA

Protecting Animals and the Earth

28th August 2009

Phil Kent
Mayor
City of Duncan
302-43 Lois Lane
Duncan, BC V9L 5H4

Re: The Use of CO₂ to Euthanize Cats at the Municipal Shelter

Dear Mayor,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairman & CEO of The Humane Society of Canada and on behalf of the millions of Canadians who share our views about the protection of animals to ask for your help.

We understand that the City of Duncan still uses CO₂ as a means to euthanize stray cats, including ferals. In our view, and based upon our extensive experience developed over the last 40 years, which is backed by science, the use of CO₂ gas is an inhumane method of euthanasia.

Attached for your reference is a brief summary of my biography working in animal protection over the last four decades across Canada and in more than 100 countries around the world.

We read with deep concern the remarks (attached) attributed to one of your Councilors who reportedly described this method of killing cats as humane and that this method is recommended by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. If these remarks have been accurately reported, based upon our experience, she is wrong on both counts.

On a personal note, I have watched thousands of animals, from a wide range of species, dying in many different ways – under no circumstances would I recommend the use of carbon dioxide in this regard.

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460-4246 Alberta St.
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With regards to her reported dramatic endorsement that: *"... If I ever own another old cat whose time has come, I would consider taking her there, rather than to the vet for the shots..."* this is indeed a regrettable fate for her next cat. The Councilor may also wish to stop and ask herself why, if this is such a preferred method of euthanasia, is using carbon dioxide to kill cats not in widespread use at all private veterinary clinics.

As the attached 2007 document from the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association indicates in part: ***"... The intravenous injection of a concentrated barbiturate with prior sedation is widely considered the most humane method for euthanizing animals. It causes a comparatively aesthetic death, is rapid-acting, reliable and effective"***.

The American Veterinary Medicine which established its own guidelines did so in 1999 drawing upon expertise from only 13 individuals in the field of veterinary medicine. In 2009, they are revising those guidelines and this time relying on 72 different individuals with a wide range of expertise who will be divided up into 12 different groups.

Further, in a seminar presented on December 16, 2004, Dr. Mohan Raj, Senior Research Fellow in the Farm Animal Division of the School of Clinical Veterinary Science at the University of Bristol in England described the effects of CO₂ on the body. CO₂ induces breathlessness – a subjective distress in breathing known as dyspnoea. According to Dr. Raj, dyspnoea in both birds and mammals "activates brain regions associated with pain and induces an emotional response of panic."

We feel that the only humane form of euthanasia is pre-anaesthetic injection followed by an intravenous barbiturate under vet supervision. However, we also need to emphasize that the loss of even a single animal's life is tragic and to this end, recommend a wide range of initiatives to reduce and eventually eliminate the animals which have to be killed in the first place.

As Mayor along with Members of Council, you need to come up creative cost effective strategies to engage your community to stop the killing of dogs and cats simply because there are not enough permanent loving homes. The Humane Society of Canada will provide you with whatever assistance we can to reach those objectives.

These would include, but are not limited to low cost spay/neuter incentives to the citizens of Duncan such as differential pricing for animal licences and low cost spay/neuter services. In addition, to help reunite lost pets with their owner we would suggest an education program featuring options such as microchipping and the Humane Society of Canada's Pet Recovery Team program; you can find more information about this program at this site:

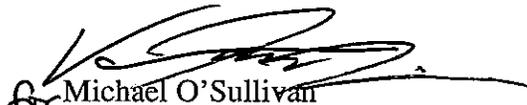
http://www.humanesociety.com/index.php?option=com_petrecovery&Itemid=171

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We would encourage the City of Duncan to include itself in the growing number of enlightened cities such as New Westminster and Nanaimo who have decided to ban this inhumane form of euthanasia from their animal control procedures.

Awaiting your reply,

I remain yours sincerely,


Michael O'Sullivan
Chairman & CEO

APPENDIX C-4

Position Statement – Euthanasia (CVMA 2007)

POSITION

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) believes that when animals are killed for food, humane necessity or any other reason, their death must be quick and cause the least possible pain and distress. The most appropriate method of euthanasia, however, may vary depending on animal species. Every practice should have a policy on euthanasia. For species other than companion animals, veterinarians should assist clients in developing a euthanasia plan for each species and class of animal under their care.

BACKGROUND

The animal must be rendered irreversibly unconscious as rapidly as possible with the least possible pain, fear and anxiety. The preferred methods used to achieve this are those that affect the brain first, followed quickly by cessation of cardiac and respiratory function. The experience, training, sensitivity and compassion of the individual carrying out the procedure are critical (1–5).

Handling and movement of animals should be minimized. Animal restraint should be in accordance with animal welfare and operator safety requirements, and sufficient to facilitate effective killing. When restraint is required, killing should follow with minimal delay (1,5).

The intravenous injection of a concentrated barbiturate with prior sedation is widely considered the most humane method for euthanizing animals. It causes a comparatively aesthetic death, is rapid-acting, reliable and effective. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that animals killed with barbiturates are disposed of in a responsible manner since such animals can be a significant source of environmental toxicity. Improper disposal may result in the illness and death of scavenging animals (1, 5).

Euthanasia of large numbers of unwanted companion animals may occur at animal shelters, pounds and animal hospitals. The CVMA believes that euthanasia is not desirable as a sole means of population control, but recognizes that euthanasia is still necessary for unwanted companion animals that cannot be placed in new homes (6). The CVMA encourages veterinarians, animal shelters and municipal governments to work together to ensure that optimal methods of euthanasia are used in all animal shelters, pounds and animal hospitals.

A variety of acceptable and humane methods of euthanasia exist for livestock and other animal species. When feasible, sedation of fractious animals is encouraged to minimize fear and risk of injury.

Large numbers of livestock and poultry have been euthanized in response to infectious disease outbreaks and natural disasters. Animal welfare considerations should be addressed within emergency response contingency plans.

A Code of Practice for Canadian Kennel Operations



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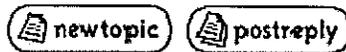
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Humane Euthanasia of a Cat-re: Duncan Gassing of Cats

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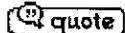


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Carol

Posted: Wed Aug 26, 2009 1:42 pm Post subject: Humane Euthanasia of a Cat-re: Duncan Gassing of Cats



Joined: 04 Jan 2005
Posts: 3128
Location: BC

My sister has approved of me posting this here.
She has sent this to others.

+++++

Because of conflicting evidence being given to Duncan council over the past few months in regard to the way Duncan's stray cats are euthanized, I felt it was necessary to actually witness the process myself to see if the incredible claims being made by the cat lobbyists were anywhere near the truth. They have told us that the CO2 method is protracted, painful and horrifying.

On Tuesday, along with two other councillors and one staff person from the city, I witnessed a cat being put to sleep using the CO2 box. The cat was feral and not well fed. He hissed if you came too close to the cage.

The CO2 box is only slightly bigger than the cage which holds the cat. There is never more than one cat in the cage at one time.

First, the box was filled with CO2. After several minutes, the wire cage containing the cat was lowered in slowly. Once it reached the bottom, the cat panted four or five times, then lost consciousness almost immediately- in about 6-8 seconds. It continued to make a few small movements for perhaps another 10 seconds, if that. And yes, I did say a little prayer for him.

He did not yowl, did not fight, did not claw the cage trying to get out, did not make any noise whatsoever other than those few pants. And then it was over. The worker left the CO2 running for another 4-5 minutes. She generally turns the gas off after that and waits another 45 minutes before removing the cat from the box and the cage.

It was fast, it was humane and was a lot quicker than when I last took my beloved old cat to the vet. She was extremely distressed, eyes and mouth wide open, tongue out, panting, trying to escape. Even after the first shot, she did not completely settle until the final lethal one. It broke my heart.

I see absolutely nothing inhumane about the way they do the CO2 procedure at Coastal Animal Control. It was gentle, it was respectful, it was humane. It has been approved by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. If I ever own another old cat whose time has come, I would consider taking her there, rather than to the vet for the shots.

Councillor Sharon Jackson

Brief Biography – Michael O'Sullivan

Over the last forty years, Michael has worked in Canada and in over 100 countries on issues affecting people, animals and the environment. During that time, he has worked on programs to help companion animals, horses and livestock, laboratory animals, wildlife and the environment.

Those projects have involved hands on experience with a wide range of field programs and also included non-invasive scientific research, working undercover; and case investigation, preparation and criminal court prosecution and appeals involving animal abusers; providing support and conducting relief operations in disaster and war zones; and investigations into the humane rearing, transport and slaughter of farm animals; reviewing case law precedents and drafting legislative proposals, humane education initiatives, forging strategic alliances with other non-governmental organizations and stakeholders, participating in international treaty negotiations and making representations to local, regional, national and international governments and bodies -- and being responsible for the overarching support mechanisms of fundraising, human resources, labour negotiations (union and non-union), information systems and administration.

Throughout his career he has published papers and been involved in more than 15,000 news interviews.

He has been a senior advisor to industry, government, non-government organizations and other key decision and policy makers.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and an additional three years of interdisciplinary university studies and attended the University of Toronto, the University of Guelph and York University. His secondary education was at St. Michael's College School and his elementary education at St. Anselm's School in Toronto.

From 1970 - 1979, while in school, he was employed by the Toronto Humane Society working in all departments and from 1982 - 1983 was the senior executive in charge of the largest humane society and full service veterinary clinic operation in Canada.

From 1979 to 1982, he was the General Manager of the Windsor-Essex County Humane Society which included a full service veterinary clinic.

From 1983 to 1993, he held a variety of positions with the World Society for the Protection of Animals as Field Representative, Acting Regional Director Western Hemisphere and Regional Director Canada & North Pacific Rim.

He was in charge of the late Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan's Into the Blue Dolphin Rehabilitation and Marine Centre Project.

Over the past sixteen years, he has headed up The Humane Society of Canada and for the last nine years served as the charity's Chairman & CEO.