

SHG Press Release

The Fat Dog Case

The RSPCA failed to alleviate Rusty's suffering.

All they achieved was to add the hunger pangs of starvation to the pain of arthritis and hip dysplasia and to separate Rusty from those he loved.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

18th January 2007

On the eve of Rusty's return to the Bentons **The Self Help Group for Farmers, Pet Owners and Others experiencing difficulties with the RSPCA** (The SHG) is breaking its silence on this matter in order to correct the misunderstandings relating to the merits of bringing this prosecution in the light of the statement by Ben Bradshaw, during the final debate before the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA) became law, that

"It is not the Government's intention to punish the owners of fat cats, although overfeeding an animal can be problematic"

Said Ernest Vine of the SHG: "We hope that once the AWA is in force the RSPCA will comply with the intentions of Parliament and will never again bring a case involving an overweight animal before the courts."

"Rusty was suffering in the care of the Bentons. Rusty has been suffering in the care of the RSPCA. And Rusty will continue to suffer until the day he dies, irrespective of whose care he is in."

"Most of Rusty's weight gain occurred following an operation to neuter him. Neutered or spayed dogs need 30% less food than unaltered dogs and it is this factor that is contributing to so much obesity in the canine world."

"In Rusty's case this reduction in food intake has to be added to the reduction necessary to account for his inability to exercise because of the pain from his hip dysplasia and severe arthritis and his need to lose weight. The only means by which he can lose weight is for his dietary intake to be restricted."

According to Duncan Davidson, the defence vet, Rusty had unusually large amounts of grass in his faeces and was desperate to eat grass when outside. Rusty's need to eat grass can be explained by Mr. Davidson's estimation that Rusty needs a 75% reduction of the normal labrador's dietary intake.

Anne Kasica said "So the RSPCA have replaced the suffering of being overweight with the suffering of feeling continually starved and desperate to eat. No-one can cure Rusty's arthritis which is the cause of his obesity. Indeed, if it were so easy to diet Jackie Ballard, the Director General of the RSPCA would have gone through life with a slender waif like build."

“Which form of suffering is worse? Rusty cannot walk and exercise even when slimmed down because of his arthritis. And in his twilight years the one pleasure that every Labrador is renowned for enjoying, eating, has been denied him as a result of this ill-judged political prosecution.”

“The Bentons were found not guilty of causing unnecessary suffering by failing to adequately treat Rusty’s ear condition because with all of the immense resources available to them, the RSPCA had also failed to cure it. Just as they have failed to cure his eye problems and arthritis.”

Indeed, Rusty had enjoyed treatment paid for by pet insurance for most of his life. But his pet insurance ended when he reached the cut off age. And the Benton’s vets, Pet Doctors, refused to treat Rusty unless they were paid cash up front. Pet Doctors also refused to let the Bentons pay in instalments.

Said Anne Kasica: “The massive costs of the RSPCA’s treatment regime for Rusty were beyond the purse of any ordinary pet owner. The RSPCA could have offered to help with the cost of veterinary treatment for Rusty but instead chose to spend many thousands of pounds in prosecuting his owners. They put Rusty through further misery by separating him from the people he loved and taking him from the only home he knew.”

“This case highlights the reasons why people are afraid to approach the RSPCA for help. We have been campaigning for some time for an animal NHS for the animals of pensioners because just when insurance is most needed, when an animal becomes elderly and its owners income drops, is the time insurance is no longer available.

Conclusion

The SHG urges government to introduce a National Animal Health Service which we believe would do more to reduce animal suffering than all of the animal welfare legislation that has been passed while this government has been in power.

The SHG urges the government to take steps to control RSPCA prosecutions by requiring them to be scrutinised by the police and CPS before they are allowed to proceed, and we ask the CPS to actively quality control all RSPCA prosecutions by taking over and dropping those which are clearly political or which no responsible prosecutor would bring.

Notes to Editors: -

References

House of Commons Hansard Debates for 06 Nov 2006 (pt 0001)
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm061106/debtext/61106-0009.htm#06110618001670>

The SHG Response to the EIG consultation
<http://the-shg.org/Consultation%20responses.htm>

Pudgy pooch lumbers home - The ChronicleHerald.ca
<http://thechronicleherald.ca/Front/552452.html>

Brothers found guilty over 'grossly' obese dog

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/animalrights/story/0,,1989216,00.html?gusrc=rss&feed=11>

Defence Barrister: Ann Marie Gregory of St. Pauls Chambers Leeds

For further comment please contact Anne Kasica on 01559 371031 or Ernest Vine on 01559 370566. Mobile 07719 367148. e-mail: shg@the-shg.org

The SHG was officially formed in June 1990 and has been helping people to defend themselves and their animals from the RSPCA ever since. The national help line number is **08700 72 66 89**

A copy of this and previous press releases from The SHG are online at

<http://www.the-shg.org/SHGPressReleases.htm>

Background information on the Self Help Group for Farmers Pet Owners and Other Experiencing Difficulties with the RSPCA can be found at <http://www.the-shg.org>

Details of further criticisms of the RSPCA can be found at the RSPCA-Animadversion website:

<http://cheetah.webtribe.net/~animadversion>

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