

SHG Press Release

The SHG challenges the Crown Prosecution Service to Review every RSPCA prosecution after two RSPCA prosecutions collapse following evidence of witness coaching and court decides RSPCA expert veterinary evidence ‘unsafe’.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
30th December 2007

The Self Help Group for Farmers, Pet Owners and Others experiencing difficulties with the RSPCA (The SHG) is challenging the Crown Prosecution Service to review every RSPCA prosecution following startling revelations.

Two recent **RSPCA prosecutions have collapsed** following admissions by the RSPCA that they:

- *Routinely hold case conferences involving lay and expert witnesses,*
- *Effectively ‘coach’ veterinary experts with the use of an extremely negatively worded pro-forma document*

During the trials:

- *District Judge Grey at Harwich Magistrates Court expressed “grave concerns” about what had happened,*
- *Magistrates at Portsmouth Magistrates Court were highly critical of the RSPCA’s conduct and methods of investigation,*
- *The Chairman of the Magistrates, Mr. Jim Morrison, stated that the RSPCA should change their practices in future,*
- *Magistrates made serious criticisms of RSPCA Inspector Janet Edwards’ failure to explain what offences were being investigated.*
- *Magistrates Chairman, Mr. Jim Morrison, stressed that in future the legislation must be explained to suspects and the RSPCA must tell them they have a right to have their own solicitor present during an interview,*
- *The RSPCA must not imply any adverse inference will be drawn if there is an adjournment for this reason,*

The revelations did not become known until the trial was under way because the RSPCA’s solicitors:

- **Steadfastly refused to disclose relevant documents to which the Defence were entitled.**

Ernest Vine of the SHG said “We have seen transcripts of RSPCA conferences from other cases, so this is not an isolated incident. In fact we have one transcript from as long ago as 1999. This should raise alarm bells with all of the relevant authorities about the safety of every previous RSPCA conviction. Indeed, it is likely that many people have erroneously pleaded guilty on the basis of the RSPCA prosecution veterinary reports alone.”

“The SHG has been campaigning for the CPS to use their powers to quality control RSPCA prosecutions for some time and we wonder how much public money donated for animal welfare, and how much court time is going to continue to be wasted before the RSPCA is brought under the control of the laws that apply to everyone else in this country.”

Anne Kasica of the SHG concluded: “We told the government that proper protections for the public were needed in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 during the consultation exercise. We warned them that such abuses of the human and civil rights of animal owners would be inevitable if they failed to implement such protections.”

“How many innocent people are going to be convicted, or put through the agonies of a highly public prosecution that fails, because the RSPCA is out of control and the relevant authorities are doing nothing to protect the public?”

Notes to Editors: -

References

Full details of the cases referred to can be found in the following articles

YOUNG KENNEL MAID ACQUITTED - RSPCA CRITICISED AGAIN AS YET ANOTHER “CRUELTY” CASE COLLAPSES

<http://the-shg.org/kennel%20maid%20acquitted.html>

Attached as a word doc.

RSPCA CRITICISED AGAIN AS YET ANOTHER “CRUELTY” CASE COLLAPSES

<http://the-shg.org/RSPCA%20criticised%20again.html>

Attached as a word doc

RSPCA pro-forma for coaching expert witnesses

<http://the-shg.org/Coaching%20of%20expert%20witnesses.html>

Attached as a word doc.

Trio cleared by court in dog cruelty case

<http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/fareham-and-meon/Trio-cleared-by-court-in.3540766.jp>

The Attorney General v The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

<http://cheetah.webtribe.net/~animadversion/The%20Attorney%20General%20v%20The%20Rspca.htm>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/3d2q7a>

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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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