

The Self Help Group for Farmers, Pet Owners and Others experiencing difficulties with the RSPCA (The SHG)

Press Release

For Immediate Release

2nd April 2008

RSPCA v Millington "Place of safety" kennel convicted of cruelty!

Being prosecuted by anyone, let alone the RSPCA, which has a conviction for perverting the course of justice, is a stressful business. However, if you are unlucky enough to have your pet seized by the RSPCA or the police and taken to a "place of safety" pending your trial, the least you would expect is that the animal will be properly looked after - even if it pines for you until you are triumphantly acquitted.

There is generally no need for animals to be seized, but the RSPCA regularly ensures that animals are taken. It also seeks to recover the (often enormous) costs of boarding them from owners who are successfully prosecuted.

The RSPCA, ever hungry for scalps, has brought a successful private prosecution against 'place of safety' kennel-owner Stuart Millington. He has been convicted of cruelty to fifteen dogs, which had already been seized once from their owners. Each dog was therefore the unlucky subject of at least two simultaneous criminal cases.

Tameside Magistrates' Court heard how the RSPCA began an investigation into Millington after one owner complained about his pet's poor condition when it was released. He had taken it to a vet.

All 15 animals at Mr Millington's 'place of safety' were 'found to be in an extremely poor bodily condition'. The kennels were "cold and wet with rough concrete floors, no food or water and little evidence of bedding".

The dogs had also acquired a number of wounds, including tail tip injuries. Some had to have their tails amputated.

All the dogs had all been placed with Millington because he ran a reputable licensed boarding kennels. Their care was being paid for, and the police and the RSPCA 'fully expected them to be given the same high level of care as any other animal'.

Mr Millington, 61, of Hilltop Kennels in Mossley, admitted leaving 15 seized dogs with nothing to eat or drink in bare concrete kennels.

The animals were in his care after being formally seized by Merseyside police during investigations conducted by them and by the RSPCA.

Mr Millington was charging fees for looking after them while their various owners were taken to court.

At least one of the dogs was linked to RSPCA and police investigations arising from the death of Ellie Lawrenson.

The SHG believes that the bizarre and unfortunate case of RSPCA v Millington shows that seized pets suffer in the care of the "places of safety" to which they are taken by the police and the RSPCA.

This suffering is not just being separated from their owners - in the ill-fated cruelty case which the RSPCA brought against Annette Nally, the RSPCA were ordered to provide boarding records for Holly, her pet dog. The "place of safety" produced records for the wrong dog, and it was later revealed that none of the treatments which the RSPCA's vet had prescribed for Holly had ever been administered.

Holly had died five months into her stay, but Ms Nally was not told until six months after Holly's death.

When Ms Nally was acquitted, the RSPCA admitted it had lost Holly's body, but only after they had been told to return it.

No doubt because of his good relationship with the police and the RSPCA - and perhaps also because he was not a farmer - Mr Millington was neither banned from keeping animals, nor sent to prison. He was fined just £2,000 with no further penalty - other than an order for some of the prosecution's costs of the case, which, for a guilty plea, at £8,000 are significant, but not high by the RSPCA's standards. The costs of £8,000 are believed to have included further vets' bills and more boarding charges.

The RSPCA's Phil Wilson said:

"As a responsible kennel provider Mr Millington ought to have provided these dogs with a far higher standard of care than he did. We feel extremely let down that this did not happen."

Anne Kasica of the SHG said:

"For once, I agree with Phil Wilson. These dogs, who had been taken from their owners, deserved proper treatment and they did not get it."

"For the most part, animals are better off staying with their owner."

"The SHG has been concerned for decades that the standards of care for seized animals in 'places of safety' are not uniformly high."

"Defendants have repeatedly complained about the condition in which animals have been released to them - dead or alive - following the end of the trial."

"We are also concerned that the charges for boarding which the RSPCA seek to recover against defendants are disproportionately high."

Ernest Vine of the SHG said:

"Many of the RSPCA's seizures are totally unnecessary. The RSPCA uses its own 'independent experts', some of whom do not know a dangerous dog when they see one. However, the RSPCA still seizes the dog, causing suffering and massive costs."

"A recent example is John McGowan's lurcher-cross Duke, who had to endure nine months in an RSPCA 'place of safety'. Duke was accused of being a 'dangerous dog', and Mr McGowan has just been acquitted and reunited with his pet."

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Word Count 862

Notes to Editors: -

References

[9 Months Locked up Under Dangerous Dogs Law - Now Duke ...](#)

Dog Magazine dot net, UK - 25 Mar 2008

Dukes owner, John McGowan had consistently stated that his dog was not a pit bull type and was actually a **lurcher** cross mastiff that he had owned since Duke ...

[Kennel Owner Guilty of Cruelty to Dogs Seized Under Dangerous Dogs Act](#)

Dog Magazine dot net, UK

Stuart Millington owner of Hilltop Kennels, pleaded guilty to causing unnecessary suffering to the dogs between 10th March and 24 March 2007. ...

[Kennel owner fined £10000](#)

Manchester Evening News, UK - 27 Mar 2008

A KENNEL owner has been ordered to pay almost £10000 for cruelty to animals seized under the Dangerous Dogs Act. Stuart Millington left 14 bull terriers and ...

[Victims of RSPCA bite back - Telegraph](#)

2 Mar 2008 ... In February, after another five days in court, a cruelty case against Annette Nally, owner of Holly, a German shepherd, was called into ...

www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2008/03/02/do0202.xml

[RSPCA Under Fire as Animal Cruelty Trial Collapses](#)

8 Feb 2008 ... "Annette Nally was, like most defendants to RSPCA prosecutions, a thoroughly ... When disclosure of these boarding records was required, ...

www.dogmagazine.net/archives/334/rspca-under-fire-as-animal-cruelty-trial-collapses/

[RSPCA Heavily Criticised as Cruelty Case Collapses](#)

A lawyer has slammed the RSPCA citing "witness rehearsal" amongst a number of to have perverted the course of justice when disciplining an employee for ...

www.dogmagazine.net/archives/284/rspca-heavily-criticised-as-cruelty-case-collapses

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>