

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

Press Release

For Immediate Release

18th August 2008

**RSPCA hit with bill for cruelty prosecution-
in the “heartland of animal cruelty”**

The Prosecutions Department of the RSPCA, led by barrister Sally Case, has been handed another large bill for the charity’s donors to pay. This time by Gateshead Magistrates in Tyne and Wear, for prosecuting Michael and Sharon Finnie who mistakenly treated their pet dog Pebbles for fleas when he had a skin condition.

The RSPCA recently sought to characterise Tyne and Wear as the cruellest locality in the UK.

Anne Kasica of the SHG said:

“The Magistrates have sent another clear message to the RSPCA.”

“The message, in my view reads:

‘Stop wasting our valuable court time and resources by prosecuting decent, hard working people who are trying their best and living on a shoestring budget just to get free publicity from a cheap headline’”

Ernest Vine, also of the SHG said:

“The way that the RSPCA have chosen to present their statistics this year is misleading. The SHG don’t believe for a minute that Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, or anywhere in the UK is the ‘heartland of animal cruelty’.”

“In Tyne and Wear, far too many cases are being taken to court by McKeags and the RSPCA. It is this disproportionate prosecution rate that is distorting the statistics.”

“In the past, magistrates gave far too much taxpayers’ money to the RSPCA and their independent expert vets and lawyers. Even failed prosecutions are frequently rewarded, making welfare cases very cheap advertising for the RSPCA.”

“RSPCA lawyers and vets can earn more for an hour than some people earn in a week.”

“The Finnies had clearly tried their best. Why didn’t the RSPCA help them? If the RSPCA had simply provided free veterinary treatment for Pebbles they would not have run up the costs of prosecuting the case and boarding fees for Pebbles.”

“They would also have avoided the heartache that both the Finnies and Pebbles have gone through by being separated.”

“The RSPCA should remember that one of their charitable objects is ‘to promote kindness’”

Anne Kasica concluded:

“The SHG believes that the CPS should actively quality control all RSPCA prosecutions by taking over and dropping those which are clearly not in the public interest and which no responsible prosecutor would bring.

“The SHG calls for a full public inquiry into the RSPCA and its activities.”

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Word Total: 376

Notes to Editors: -

1. The cruelty allegations against Mr and Mrs Finnie were that they failed to seek the advice of a vet. It was common ground that Michael and Sharon Finnie were treating Pebbles for fleas, but she turned out to have a different skin condition.
2. The case was handled by Clive McKeag, a partner in the Newcastle law firm McKeags. Mr. McKeag is the RSPCA’s lawyer in the North East.
3. Gateshead Magistrates said they would not be making any award for the RSPCA's legal and veterinary costs to be paid from central funds.
4. The bill which the charity has to pay runs to over £2,600.
5. The Magistrates also turned down a request from Mr McKeag for the RSPCA to keep Pebbles – they ordered that Pebbles must be returned to Mr and Mrs Finnie immediately.
6. The Finnies were on low incomes.
7. Please note that the petition to the Prime Minister for a public Inquiry into the policies and running of the RSPCA received 2,029 signatures. <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/rspcainquiry/>

References:

RSPCA hit with bill for pet cruelty prosecution
<http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/north-east-news/>

Or

<http://tinyurl.com/5h3ky8>

Voluntary Sector: RSPCA remains in top spot

Anti-cruelty campaign helps RSPCA retain pole position for second month in a row.
The RSPCA has made it two months in a row at the top of NGO Watch, after claiming animal cruelty rose 24 per cent last year.

<http://www.prweek.com/uk/sectors/media>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/59zdnz>

McKeag's Law firm

<http://www.mckeags.co.uk/>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/6jer4g>

Shocking cases of animal cruelty

<http://www.journallive.co.uk/north-east-news/todays-news/>

Or

<http://tinyurl.com/5t2ex4>

Figures show rise in North East animal cruelty

<http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/>

or

<http://tinyurl.com/58t7gl>

RSPCA Statistics 2008 are a sham built on human and animal suffering

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

For further comment please contact Anne Kasica on 01559 371031 or Ernest Vine on 01559 370566.
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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 **0844 700 66 90**

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>