

# ***DEDICATION***

This tool kit is dedicated to all the transition house workers and animal welfare workers who recognize the importance of animals in the lives of women and their children and who are working towards meeting the needs of families fleeing violence with their companion animals.

# ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

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Vancouver Foundation

**(insert logo)**

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# ***STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY***

This tool kit is intended for the use of your transition house in developing a pet program. The information contained in this resource should only be shared with groups and organizations with whom you develop partnerships for the purpose of your pet program. The information contained in this tool kit should not be shared with the general public.

# ***PREFACE***

The BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCYSTH) is a provincial association representing shelters for abused women and their children (transition houses, safe homes and second stage programs) as well as coordinating Children Who Witness Abuse Counselling Programs throughout the province.

The link between family violence and animal abuse was first addressed by the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses at the “Creating a Legacy of Hope” International Conference on Children Exposed to Domestic Violence in 1999. Frank Ascione, a leading authority on “the link”, along with members of the BC SPCA presented a workshop at this Vancouver conference. The workshop addressed issues around women leaving abuse and their companion animals. The transition house workers who attended this workshop were given information about the ways that abusers often use animals to reaffirm their power and control. They threaten abuse and even kill animals to keep their partners in their relationships, knowing that they will not leave their beloved pets behind.

This information led BCYSTH to conduct a province-wide survey to determine how transition houses were dealing with the added pressures of working with women leaving abusive relationships with their companion animals. What we concluded from this survey was that the majority of transition houses were able to offer few alternatives to women with pets, other than to bring them to a friend’s or family member’s place. What we also found was that transition houses really wanted to help and find solutions and the majority of them saw this as a major and ongoing issue within their shelter.

From the information gathered from this survey and others, it was determined that transition houses were in need of some solutions to meet the needs of women leaving abusive relationships with pets. What was also determined was that different transition houses and different communities would need to be presented with a variety of solutions to find one that would best suit them and their clients. The intention of this resource is to help fulfill the complex needs of transition houses and their clients with pets.

# ***INTRODUCTION***

Transition houses face a complex challenge when working with women leaving abusive relationships who fear for the safety of their companion animals. To meet the needs of these women, transition houses must be presented with some options for ways they can help in finding a safe place for a woman's pets, out of reach of an abuser.

Often an abuser will use animals to manipulate women to stay in a violent relationship or to return to one. Abusers know that the threat of harm to a beloved animal will give them added power and control in their relationships. It is for this reason that this tool kit was developed. This tool kit includes information to help transition houses develop programs that will be feasible and sustainable and will meet the complex needs of clients and their companion animals.

The C.A.R.E. resource includes information on various alternatives for transition houses to look at when developing their own program. It includes information on building a shelter for animals at the transition house, having them stay within the transition house, fostering animals, and working with other community organizations such as the SPCA and veterinarians.

This tool kit also offers relevant information on the health and safety of animals and transition house staff and clients, including how to reduce the chance of dog bites and having animals spayed or neutered. C.A.R.E. also looks at the costs of running a program and some fundraising ideas. Liability and legal issues are also addressed with regard to ownership of animals and waiver forms. Current research on the link between family violence and animal abuse and successful programs that are currently running are also included.

## ***THE LINK BETWEEN FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ANIMAL ABUSE***

When looking at the link between violence against people and animal abuse there are two connected aspects to consider. Research has been done that shows a clear link between people who abuse animals as children and people who commit violent crimes as adults. The other side to the link is around family violence and animal abuse. Research has found that in homes where people are abused, often the animals of the house suffer abuse as well. It is the latter aspect of the link that we will be focusing on for the purpose of this tool kit; though when looking at the cycles of violence, it is still clear that the two aspects of the link are intertwined.

When children witness the abuse of their family's animal companions they are impacted psychologically and emotionally. Some children begin to see the abuse as normal behaviour and go on to use animals to act out their own anger and aggression. Other children become very protective of their animals and are under a great deal of stress from the worry that their companion animals will be harmed. Children who abuse animals are at risk of going on to commit violent crimes in their adult lives.

*Caution: the following paragraph contains details of cruelty towards animals committed by serial killers, some may find it graphic.*

Research has shown that many violent offenders have a history of animal cruelty. Serial killers including:

- Mark Lepine, who killed 14 female students and injured 13 others at the Ecole Polytechniques in Montreal, reportedly slaughtered pigeons with a pellet gun as a youth.
- Jeffrey Dalmer, convicted of murder and dismemberment of 17 men in Milwaukee, did "brain surgery" on animals in his youth.
- Albert De Salvo, the "Boston Strangler" in his youth shot arrows into dogs and cats he held trapped in orange crates.
- Ted Bundy, serial killer reportedly spent his early years with a grandfather who tortured animals.
- David Berkowitz, New York's "Son of Sam", as a youth, shot his neighbor's Labrador Retriever.

Transition House workers have seen the impact of animal abuse and threats of violence against companion animals for a long time. The transition houses that we heard from told many stories of women not leaving an abusive relationship sooner, or at all, or returning to an abusive relationship out of fear of what might happen to their beloved animals at the hands of their abuser. "A Canadian survey [found that] up to 50% [of women] delayed leaving [abusive relationships]" out of fear for the safety of their pets (Ascione, 1997, as cited in Frederickson, 2001).

Abusive men often use animals to demonstrate to children and women their control and power. The link between family violence and animal abuse has become more and more recognized and action has been taken in Canada and the United States by animal welfare agencies and agencies serving women and children. An example of this is that social workers and SPCA inspectors in Ontario are being encouraged to observe the safety of both animals and children when they are called to conduct a home investigation (Wickens, 1998). Both sides are trained to watch for signs of abuse and report abuse to the appropriate authorities. This collaborative work will lead to the rescue of more children and animals from abusive homes. BC is working towards this model as well and already BC SPCA Special Provincial Constables are being trained to identify signs that a child is being abused.

In BC, a curriculum was developed in 2002 for both animal abuse workers and family violence workers. It is a one-day workshop to increase participants' awareness and understanding of the links between animal abuse and human abuse, to share approaches and strategies to respond appropriately and to discuss ways to work together and build community coalitions. To find out more about this curriculum, contact the BC SPCA (see the "Resources" section for contact information).

## ***MAKING A CONNECTION WITH LOCAL AGENCIES/ VETERINARIANS***

### ***Approaching an SPCA branch***

An SPCA shelter may be your best resource for information in developing your own program for pets, or working together and boarding or fostering companion animals for your transition house. There are 40 BC SPCA shelter branches in communities across BC. These include, Vancouver, Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, Maple Ridge, Richmond, Surrey, Chilliwack, West Vancouver, Squamish Valley, Sunshine Coast, Powell River, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, Queen Charlottes, Trail, East Kootenay (Cranbrook), Nelson, Boundary (Grand Forks), Victoria, Cowichan, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Parksville/Qualicum, Comox, Campbell Rive, Salt Spring Island, Kelowna, South Okanagan/Similkameen (Penticton), Shuswap, Kamloops, Vernon, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, Quesnel, North Cariboo (Prince George), South Peace (Dawson Creek), North Peace (Fort St. John).

Each of these shelters has a foster program to care for animals that cannot go into a BC SPCA shelter. These foster programs are used for various reasons (see the "Foster Programs" section for further details). All of the SPCA shelters in BC work autonomously. The BC SPCA has some authority over the service delivery, but at this time each shelter has the power to decide whether working with a transition house is suitable for them.

There are two ways that an SPCA shelter may be able to work with and help transition houses. One way is by opening their foster program up to include fostering pets of women who are in transition houses (please see "Foster Programs" section for details). The other possible option would be for SPCA branches to board companion animals of transition house clients at their shelter.

Many SPCA shelters are already working with a transition house in their community. The SPCA shelters that have partnerships with transition houses and who were contacted for information on their programs stated that boarding pets at their shelters was ideal for all parties involved, including the transition house, women leaving abuse and for

themselves. In most cases when animals are housed at the SPCA, the women and children residing at the transition house can even go and visit their pets.

The Nanaimo SPCA shelter has had a relationship with Haven: A Society for Women and Children for nearly seven years. Most often pets of women in the transition house are boarded at their SPCA shelter, as opposed to being placed in foster homes. The Nanaimo SPCA branch has a private secluded kennel within its facility. They also have an outdoor area, which is hidden from the street, where dogs can be exercised. They encourage women and their children to visit their animals as much as they like.

Women at the Haven: Society for Women and Children, are asked to sign a waiver stating that they will notify the Nanaimo SPCA if they need their animals to be cared for longer than 30 days. As long as the shelter is notified that a woman needs her pets boarded for a longer time they will do their best to accommodate them. This SPCA shelter does not require that animals come in with up to date vaccinations and will provide vaccinations at no cost if it is requested.

For more details about this program and other successful pet programs and partnerships, please see the “Successful Pet Programs” section.

If your local SPCA shelter is unable to help with boarding or fostering pets, you can still try to connect with them for advice. They will hopefully be willing to provide you with their knowledge and expertise if you are developing your own foster program or boarding pets on-site at your transition house.

Many of the SPCA shelters are interested in helping as much as they can. However, just like you, often they too are forced to work with minimal resources and staff. This may make it impossible for them to play a large role in your pet program or developing a partnership with your transition house, but there will still be opportunities for you to work together and learn from one another.

## ***SPCA Reporting Policies***

If a woman has left her companion animals with her abuser and it is not possible for your transition house to help her find a safe place for them, you should be aware of the capabilities of the SPCA Special Provincial Constables to keep her animals safe. If her abusive partner makes a threat against an animal, it may be enough to warrant an investigation that could result in the seizure of the animals.

## ***When a Report is Made to the BC SPCA***

When a report is made to the BC SPCA the following steps are taken:

1. A Special Provincial Constable conducts an initial assessment to determine if the report is valid, marginal, unfounded or vindictive.
2. If the animal is at risk, an investigation is started as soon as possible.
3. A Special Provincial Constable will then conduct a detailed assessment in which the constable and a law enforcement officer conduct an interview of the persons involved and gather physical evidence. The animal may also be taken for a veterinary exam.
4. Once all the information is gathered from the detailed investigation, the strategy for action and treatment is determined.
5. Outcomes include:
  - Animal is not in need of protection
  - Animal may be able to stay within family if not in immediate danger
  - Animal is in need of protection and may be removed
  - Family may need support services for assistance in some form
  - Further investigation leading to charges being laidIn most cases of confirmed cruelty the result is removal of the animal from the family.
6. Follow-up and evaluation to assess progress or outcomes of the case.

## ***What Information Should Be Included When Reporting Animal Abuse***

When reporting animal abuse the following information should be including:

- date, name, address and phone number of alleged offender;
- type and detailed physical description of the animal (name if possible);
- description of the condition of the animal(s), housing, food, water and exercise facilities;
- owners' names and addresses;
- details of the incident(s) that prompted the report;
- nature and extent of any injuries;
- composition and employment situation of the family;
- description of home environment, and
- names, addresses and phone numbers of any witnesses.

## ***Case Study***

Sally has been married to her husband Ted for nine years and they have two young children together. Although Ted and Sally both work outside of the house, the couple has a small farm with one horse, some chickens and two cows. Having the animals was originally Ted's idea, but their primary caregiver has always been Sally. Sally has grown particularly fond of her horse, Ginger who she tries to spend lots of time with. Riding Ginger gives Sally comfort and makes her feel free and safe, especially during hard times.

Over the years Sally has endured severe emotional and physical violence at the hands of her husband. She has tried to leave the relationship twice, but Ted knows how to get Sally to return home. He threatens to stop feeding their animals. Sally knows from past experience with Ted that he will follow through with his threats. She was away for 4 days before returning home the last time and Ginger was already incredibly dehydrated and Ted had removed all the food from her reach.

When Sally leaves for the third time, she enters a transition house. She feels safe in the shelter but she knows that it's only a matter of time before her beloved horse dies of starvation. She is under a great deal of stress and the added worry about Ginger is making Sally feel like maybe she should just return once again to her abuser. A support worker at the transition house suggests to Sally that she contact the SPCA in their community and let them know of the threats against her horse. The worker offers to make the call for Sally and report the threat. The threat and the information about the state that Sally found Ginger in the last time she tried to leave Ted is enough for the SPCA to obtain a warrant to visit the farm and check on Ginger and the other animals.

The Special Provincial Constable goes to the farm while Ted is at work, to avoid a confrontation. He finds that, once again, Ginger has been left without any water and her feed is in the barn but out of her reach. She is severely dehydrated and showing signs of weakness and stress. This evidence is enough to remove all of the animals from the farm to a safe place.

Ted's power over Sally has just greatly diminished. Sally now feels a huge sense of relief and she can begin to plan a safe future for herself and her children.

## ***Some Key Points***

- Encourage women to document any threats that are made in regards to their pets (date and nature of threat).
- Explain that the more detailed the information that she is able to offer about past abuse/threats, the easier it will be for the SPCA to seize an animal.
- Educate women about what the capabilities of the SPCA are in seizing abused animals or animals where abuse has been threatened.
- The abuse/threats can be reported anonymously to the SPCA.

## ***Approaching a Local Veterinarian***

Although not every community has an SPCA branch, the majority do have local veterinarians. Veterinarians are becoming more aware of the link between family violence and animal abuse and many of them are interested in getting involved and helping out.

Many veterinarians throughout the province will be willing to help in a variety of capacities. Some Veterinarians will be able to provide free vaccinations and spaying and neutering, while others will be interested in developing partnerships that include boarding pets and developing foster programs.

If veterinarians are interested in joining with your transition house to form a pet program including boarding pets, there are some important issues that should be addressed. Although many vets have indicated their interest in working with transition houses, some have brought up concerns which have created some apprehensions. One main fear among veterinarians is that the abuser may become violent with the staff and/or veterinarian if he discovers his pet is at their office. Another issue that may cause some veterinarians trepidation in joining you to develop a pet program is dealing with abandoned animals once a woman has left the transition house. Both of these concerns are addressed below.

## ***Safety***

SPCA shelter staff is trained around issues of confidentiality and safety because they deal with complaints of abuse and neglect and angry pet owners who have had their animals seized. Veterinarians and their staff are much less likely to be familiar with these issues.

When working with veterinarians, it will be important for both sides to educate each other about their positions, needs and concerns. Transition houses should be very clear about the safety risks that may be involved for the vets and their staff and together they should come up with some solutions that will result in everyone feeling comfortable with the partnership developed.

Strategies may include creating a confidentiality agreement, which addresses issues around the importance of confidentiality for both the client and the veterinarian involved. If the location of the animal is kept secret and he/she is secluded within the veterinarian's office, there will be much less chance of the abuser discovering where the animal is staying. In some cases, you may want to provide a veterinarian with the option of not even telling the women in the transition houses where their pets are. In this case, only the transition house staff and the veterinarian's staff would know how to locate the animals. See the "Maintaining Confidentiality" section for further details.

You can also ask a woman who has a pet that is going to be staying at a veterinarian's office if she is comfortable providing a description of her abuser so that the veterinarian's staff can call the police immediately if he were to enter the premises.

## ***Abandoned Animals***

The majority of women who are bringing their animals to your pet program will be devoted to their companion animals and will make every effort possible to find

accommodation that will accept pets after they leave the shelter. However, there may be times when animals are left behind for various reasons, including lack of adequate rental housing allowing pets (See the “Pets in Rental Housing” section for further details).

Many agencies that already have pet programs in place have found a simple and effective solution that helps avoid pets being left behind. They have the women sign a form/contract that states:

- the length of time that their animal is able to stay with the agency (usually 30 days);
- that a time extension may be possible, but the woman must contact them before the original time agreed upon has passed, and
- if the animal is left past the agreed upon time and no arrangements for an extension have been made, the animal becomes the sole property of the agency. The animal can then be placed for adoption through the SPCA or local Humane Society. If you do not have a local animal welfare agency and you are unable to find a new home for an animal, you can transport him or her to the closest SPCA to your community.

The Nanaimo SPCA, who has a partnership with Haven: A Society for Women and Children, developed a contract in response to a couple of instances where animals were left behind. Since the implementation of the contract, they have had no further problems.

## ***FOSTER PROGRAMS***

The BC SPCA has developed foster programs that have been implemented in all of the SPCA shelters in BC. The foster programs are used to care for animals who cannot go into a shelter for various reasons, including behavioral problems and while recovering from a sickness. This program has enabled the BC SPCA to bring an end to the euthanization of animals in BC.

### ***Working with an Existing SPCA Shelter Foster Program***

If you have a local SPCA, contact them to discuss whether it is possible for them to include pets of women in your transition house in their foster program. They may be able to identify some fosterers who will be suitable to care for these special companion animals. Not all of the SPCA shelters will have the resources to find foster care for the pets of women leaving abusive relationships.

If you are developing a partnership with your local SPCA shelter and they are going to be fostering out some of the animals of transition house clients, you may want to look at some additional issues. Confidentiality will be a very important factor to consider. Developing a system that will respect the confidentiality of both the transition house client and the fosterers will be important for safety reasons, especially in a small town (this is briefly addressed later in this section and more thoroughly in the “Maintaining Confidentiality” section). Another issue to consider is criminal record checks for fosterers, or finding a way to do thorough background checks.

At this time the SPCA shelters do not conduct criminal record checks on their fosterers, although they do have the question: “Are you prepared to submit a criminal records check?” on their application form to become a fosterer. You can decide with the SPCA shelter that you’re working with if you think it is necessary and feasible to add this to the criteria for becoming a fosterer of animals who are coming through your transition house.

## ***Developing a Foster Program On Your Own***

If you would like to develop a foster program on your own, a good first step would be finding a dedicated volunteer, unless you have a staff person who has time to coordinate this kind of program. Once you’ve found a committed person to coordinate your foster program you may want to put together a small committee or ask your Board of Directors to work together to come up with expectations of fosterers and put some procedures in place for your program. You’ll also have to look at identifying people in your community that may be able to provide suitable and safe foster homes for the companion animals.

### ***Foster Program Procedures***

When developing procedures for your foster program, use the following questions as a guide:

- How are you going to identify potential fosterers within your community? Are you going to use volunteers who are already affiliated with your transition house? Are you going to advertise for the fosterers?
- How are you going to screen potential fosterers? Will you be conducting criminal record checks?
- Will you conduct home visits of fosterers? If yes, will they be done one time before someone becomes a fosterer, or sporadically throughout the time someone is a fosterer?
- Approximately how many pets will you need to foster each month?
- Are you going to foster farm animals as well as domestic animals?

- Are you going to provide fosterers with food and supplies for pets? If yes, will you approach a company/individual for donations or will the transition house cover the costs?
- How will you address the issue of maintaining the confidentiality of transition house clients? Will the fosterers be asked to exercise the animals only in private locations? Will families be able to visit their pets at the fosterers?
- How will the animals be transported from the transition house to the foster home?
- Will fosterers be asked to be available day and night for animals to be dropped off, or is your transition house prepared to care for animals overnight if they come in the evening?
- What will be the maximum time that pets can be fostered?
- What plan will you have in place for an animal that is abandoned by a transition house client?
- What will be included in your contract with the transition house clients?
- How will you assess the temperaments of companion animals before they are fostered?
- Do you have a lawyer who can help you to develop a “Volunteer Agreement and Release Form” for fosterers?

*Please see below for some answers to the above questions, or check in specific sections of this tool kit for further details.*

## ***Locating and Screening Potential Fosterers***

If you have a local SPCA, they will be a helpful resource for you in developing your own foster program. If you do not have an SPCA in your community, you should approach a veterinarian or another animal care professional in your community to see if they are interested or know of people who might be interested in becoming fosterers or supporting your program. This is also a good way to make community connections that can help you in the future. For instance, if you tell your local dog groomer about your foster program to see if he/she is interested in becoming a fosterer, you are opening the door for them to donate food or supplies to help out if they aren't interested in fostering.

## ***Confidentiality***

Especially in rural communities, confidentiality of both the abused woman and the fosterer will be difficult to maintain, but not impossible.

Although it would be ideal for families to be able to visit their companion animals while they are in foster care, in most cases it is advisable that the fosterer be kept separate from the animal's family. This protects both sides from the abuser. If the fosterer is approached, he/she has no knowledge of the whereabouts of the family and, vice versa, if the abuser approaches the woman looking for the animals (See the “Maintaining Confidentiality” section for further details).

For communities who have a local SPCA and who have an extremely high risk situation at hand, there may be some options regarding moving pets to other areas in the province. Air Canada has been working with the SPCA and transporting animals to different communities where they will have a better chance of being adopted.

## ***Fostering Farm Animals***

Many of our rural transition house members indicated to us that including farm animals into their potential pet programs was a huge concern for them. There are a lot of things to consider when looking at fostering farm animals. You may have to accept that, even if you have some fosterers that will care for farm animals, there will be some different issues to look at and it will be a more complicated task than fostering other animals.

The SPCA does foster farm animals within their programs. They sometimes need more time to find foster homes for larger animals, but overall the process is the same for farm animals as any others. The Nanaimo SPCA once found foster homes for 67 farm animals of a woman who was staying at the local transition house. Although this was a challenge, their community came through for them in providing the necessary accommodations.

If you are going to foster farm animals there are two issues that need to be addressed more extensively than when fostering domestic animals. The first is confidentiality. In some cases it will be more difficult to maintain the confidentiality of the transition house client and the foster home. It will be important to talk to fosterers about their comfort level in housing animals, including whether the animals are going to be roaming freely on their property or kept in a barn or shelter. Also, will the fosterer know who the animals belong to? If so, it is important that the fosterer understands the sensitivity necessary in these situations (see the “Confidentiality” section of this tool kit for more details).

The second issue is cost. Caring for horses or cows or any other farm animals can be very costly. If you are going to foster these animals you will need a plan to come up with some emergency funds available to the fosterers for food and supplies. Some fosterers will be willing to provide food and supplies, but you should have some money put aside just in case (see the “Potential Costs to Transition Houses” section for more information)

## ***Abandoned Animals***

If a woman leaves the transition house without claiming her pets from your foster program, the animals become the property of whoever has possession of them. It is then your responsibility to find the animals new homes. It is illegal for you to abandon the animals. They can be taken to a local SPCA or you can transport them to the closest SPCA to your community if you do not have one. Also, in nearly every community in BC, there are animal welfare agencies (apart from the SPCA) or informal groups of animal lovers who will take animals and try to find good homes for them.

# ***ON-SITE SHELTERS FOR COMPANION ANIMALS***

Ideally, women and children would never have to be separated from their beloved companion animals and all transition houses would have the capacity and resources to house the pets of women on-site. However, this is very difficult for many transition houses to even consider for various reasons, including space, finances, and health and safety issues. Although there are many factors to look at, some transition houses will still find that this is a feasible solution for them and their clients.

## ***Benefits of Keeping Women and Children with their Animals***

Animals provide women and children with emotional support and love. These relationships are very important and their impact should not be underestimated. "Women have said that companion animals are their only source of self-esteem and spiritual gratification" (Frederickson, 2001). They also create stability for those fleeing abuse whose lives are in transition. For children, having their pets with them can make the transition house feel more like home. Companion animals provide an unconditional love that is comforting to people.

The human/animal bond has recently gained the attention of professionals in health care fields as well as in the behavioral sciences. Pets have beneficial psychological effects throughout the life cycle on the health and well-being of individuals. Raupp (1999) has found that strong emotional ties are formed and can be described as an attachment bond:

Attachment is discussed as part of the relationship [between people and animals] because humans often: view their pets as family members (Cain, 1985; Hickford et al., 1982); acknowledge a pet's contribution to family morale (Albert & Anderson, 1997); find emotional closeness with, accept responsibility for, and share activities with pets (Poresky, et al., 1988); become emotionally involved with or committed to pets (Staats et al., 1996); and grieve when a pet dies (Planchon & Templer, 1996). Women have shown more attachment for and grief about their companion animals than men. Extensive evidence exists that children often feel strong affection for pets and benefit from positive relationships with them (Davis et al., 1985)

The attachments and bonds that people form with their companion animals make the beloved pets an easy target for abusers. Not knowing that your animals are safe can

create intense stress in adults and children. This is the main reason that transition houses like Kootenay Haven have made it possible for companion animals to stay within their shelter with their families (for more details on Kootenay Haven's pet program see the "Successful Pet Programs" section).

## ***Outline of Pet Shelter Standards***

Use common sense when building and developing an outdoor shelter for animals. The BC SPCA has come up with some standards for the construction of a shelter to meet the needs of dogs. The guidelines they have developed are as follows:

When kept outdoors, dogs must have access to shelter. Type of shelter needed must take regional weather conditions into consideration and varies with age, health, body condition, type of coat, breed, etc.

- Doghouses should provide protection from the elements (i.e., with dry bedding, protection from draft, positioned in shady area, water proof).
- Doghouses must be sized to allow the dog to move freely, stand, turn and lie down, but not too big in order to trap animal's body heat to warm space in cold weather.
- They must be insulated if needed (based on regional differences).

Passage House in Smithers has constructed an outdoor sheltered dog run on their property. It was built in 2000 and has a capacity for one large dog and one small dog at a time. It is insulated to protect the dogs against cold winter weather and has an area where each dog can run separately. They also have a wired fence surrounding the dog area (to find out more about the pet program at Passage House see the "Successful Pet Programs" section).

## ***Noise By-Laws***

One of the main concerns that transition houses brought up when looking at boarding pets at their shelter was barking dogs. They had concerns about having to deal with complaints from neighbors and city by-laws. Every municipality and city in BC and Yukon have their own procedures and policies around complaints of barking dogs. These include: sending out a package to the complainant including a log to be completed; once the log is done and sent back to the city, they will then send a letter to the home where the complaint has been filed to; and, sending out a by-law enforcement officer every time there is a complaint about barking dogs. If you are concerned about breaking a noise by-law you should call the "By-Law Enforcement" department of your city or municipality and ask what their procedure for dealing with this is. This will be more of an issue to consider if your transition house has neighbors close by.

## ***MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY***

Confidentiality is a very important issue to look at no matter what pet program you implement and affiliate with your shelter. Whether pets are being boarded at the local SPCA or at a veterinarian's office, within the transition house or in a foster program, for the safety of everyone involved confidentiality has to be made a priority. Although veterinarians and SPCA employees may be knowledgeable about the dynamics of family violence, there are some issues that may not have occurred to them or their staff. You should come up with some policies around confidentiality that you and the other parties involved can all feel comfortable with. The importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the woman, her pet and the foster family (when applicable) should be understood by everyone involved.

There are many different steps that can be taken to ensure that abusers do not discover the whereabouts of their pets.

## ***Pets in Foster Care***

- For pets that are in foster care it is suggested that the fosterers are not given the name or the whereabouts of the family. This will protect both the family and the fosterer if the abuser does try to contact either side.
- It is also advisable to explain to the fosterer that the family is fleeing abuse, but no more information is necessary. This will be a much more significant issue if you are in a rural area where many people know each other and would recognize someone's pets.
- If possible, fosterers can be asked to exercise dogs only after dark, or in their own yard.
- They should also be asked to keep the animals inside their home.
- Fosterers should sign a waiver to indicate they understand the need for confidentiality and will maintain it to the best of their abilities.

## ***Pets at an SPCA Shelter or a Veterinarian's Office***

- Pets should be kept in an area of the shelter or office that is private and not accessible to the public.
- Women should sign a waiver allowing the shelter or office to contact them directly.
- All staff are notified of the situation and are asked to be aware of anyone who is acting suspiciously in the vicinity of the shelter or office.
- Pets can be temporarily re-licensed to the SPCA shelter.
- All records and paperwork associating the animal with the woman are kept in a secure location.

In cases where you feel that the abuser is likely to find his pet or become violent if he did locate his animal, you should talk to your local SPCA shelter about their pet transport program. At this time in BC, Air Canada has a commitment with the BC SPCA to move animals from one community to another within the province. This program is used to re-locate animals where they have a better chance of being adopted. It may be possible in extreme situations to re-locate an animal to ensure the safety of everyone involved. In this case, only the staff at the original shelter and the new one would know where the animal has been moved to, and when the woman is ready to take her pet back it would be possible to fly the pet home again.

The staff at the SPCA branches has been trained around security issues and therefore is able to deal with an abuser entering the shelter looking for his animal. SPCA shelters are forced to deal with this occasionally after they have seized an abused or neglected animal. However, if animals are being boarded at a veterinarian's office, it is likely that the staff will never have had experience with hostile or violent people entering their office. It is also unlikely that they will have had training to deal with this sort of situation.

For these reasons, extra measures of confidentiality may be required, depending on how comfortable the veterinarian and his/her staff are with the risks involved. For example, it may be advisable, if at all possible, to have animals boarded at a vet's office other than one they may have been taken to previously. If an abuser is looking for their family's pet, he is more likely to look at the family's own veterinary office, rather than one he is unfamiliar with. Also, animals should be kept in complete seclusion from the public. Only those who are authorized should have access to the animal. Dogs should be exercised in as confidential a manner as possible.

## ***Pets in Transition Houses***

- Pets should be kept in an area of the transition house or yard where they are not visible from the street.
- If the animals are kept in an outdoor shelter on the transition house's premises, it should be as far from neighbors as possible to avoid noise and visibility of the animals.
- Animals should be exercised during times that clients with pets feel confident and secure that they will not be seen by their abusers (i.e., in smaller/rural communities).

At the shelters in BC who have already implemented a pet program, there have not been any security problems that we are aware of.

*Many of the ideas in this section were taken from the "Confidentiality and Safety Issues" Chapter (pp. 40-46) of the Safe Havens for Pets book, written by Frank Ascione (2000) (See Bibliography section for further details on this and other sources used).*

# ***POTENTIAL COSTS TO TRANSITION HOUSES***

Running a pet program through the transition house will most likely have some costs attached to it. Most women will be unable to contribute money or food for their pets while they are staying at the transition house. If you choose to build an on-site shelter for companion animals, you are looking at the costs of materials to construct the shelter, as well as costs of maintaining it.

## ***Costs of Food/Animal Supplies***

A lot of the transition houses with existing pet programs have developed relationships with local pet supply stores. In one case, the pet store donates all of its damaged or broken bags of food to the transition house. The transition house is then able to keep a supply on-hand for any animals that enter the transition house or use their foster program. This is a great way for pet stores to be involved with minimal costs to their businesses.

## ***How to Approach Pet Supply Stores for their Support***

Before you approach a local pet supply store, you should decide what you would like to ask them for. Put together a package of information for the store that includes the following:

- Your agency's mandate and mission statement.
- A brief background on the link between family violence and animal abuse, including statistics on the percentage of women who delay leaving abuse and on the percentage of women leaving abusive relationships who have pets who have been abused (feel free to use parts of the "Link" section in this tool kit).
- A letter, including a request for support, followed by a description of your pet program, including a budget (that lists the costs of running the program).
- In the letter, include any recognition opportunities you are able to offer the pet supply store. For example, inform them that you will thank them for their donation in your newsletter, or written publications.
- Information pamphlets on your agency can also be included.

Although every situation is different, in most cases the best way to begin forming a relationship with a local pet supply store is to call the store and set up a meeting with the manager. If you already have a connection with the manager or owner of the store, it might feel more appropriate for you to drop by in person without an initial phone call. If you are going to drop in without an appointment, make sure you go at a time that will be slow for the store. For instance, a good time to go would be early in the day on a Monday or Tuesday.

The manager might get many requests for either money or product donations, therefore some will be unable or unwilling to meet with you at all. In this case, drop the request package in the mail, ensuring that you have put it to the attention of the manager and include his/her name. If you live in an area where there are several pet supply stores, you should approach as many of them as you can. It can't hurt, and it will increase your chances of getting at least one positive response.

Make sure you use any connection you might have with a pet supply store. If you buy your own pet food at one store on a regular basis, mention this when you send them your letter. Let them know that you are a valued customer; tell them how much you enjoy shopping in their store and why. This shows the manager that he/she has a vested interest in supporting your pet program.

If you are successful in obtaining a donation of pet food you may want to ask the donor to sign a confidentiality agreement that states he/she will not disclose any particular information about your pet program (ie. that you have fosterers in the community or that you house animals at your shelter).

If you approach pet supply stores and you do not receive any donations or support and you are still looking for a way to provide women or your fosterers with inexpensive food for pets, you have another possible option. A final solution could be making your own dog and cat food. It is relatively inexpensive to produce homemade pet food. However, of course it is time consuming.

If you are interested in obtaining pet food recipes, a good place to start would be the internet. Some websites with recipes are:

[www.doggieconnection.com](http://www.doggieconnection.com)

[www.recipesource.com](http://www.recipesource.com)

If these don't work out for you there are hundreds more on the internet that you can check. Use keywords such as: pet food and recipes

## ***ANIMAL STRESS***

Animals can feel stress much the same way humans do. Moving pets and taking them out of their homes can cause them to feel anxious. They are also very sensitive to the feelings and emotions felt by their loved-ones. "For many animals, having to witness

their human female companions being assaulted [is] extremely stressful” (Flynn, 1999). This form of psychological abuse can have a huge impact on the overall health of an animal.

## ***Dogs Experiencing Emotional Distress***

Dogs experiencing emotional distress may demonstrate the following:

- a low propensity for social interaction (for example dog does not wag tail when spoken to gently or show a playful reaction to high pitch and playful tone)
- excessive anxiety upon approach
- excessive fear aggression upon approach
- signs of maladaptive (abnormal) behaviour such as:
  - repetitive behaviours (for example: on-going tail-chasing, pacing, turning in circles, jumping, barking or howling incessantly)
  - excessive digging or chewing
  - self mutilation
  - eating of own stools (also a sign of a deficient diet)

They may also display the following body language:

- avoidance
- dilated pupils
- trembling
- shaking
- yawning repeatedly
- whining or excessive vocalizing
- sweaty paws (leaving sweaty paw prints on the floor)
- repeatedly licking upper lip
- sudden shedding
- snapping or growling for no apparent reason
- seem disorientated

Signs of depression:

- lethargy
- lack of interest in surroundings
- cannot be engaged in play
- lack of interest in food treats
- lack of interest in interesting sounds (squeaky toy)
- seems unable to learn even a simple command
- will not attempt to defend him/herself if threatened

## ***Cats Experiencing Emotional Distress***

Cats experiencing emotional distress may demonstrate the following:

- anxiety (backed up against a wall or other item, ears and body flattened, pupils partially dilated, whiskers retracted, tail tightly tucked around body)
- fear when approached (ears move to the back of head, pupils fully dilated, whiskers pan out and forward). Cat will hiss and give quick strikes with paw.

- depression (lethargic, lack of interest in moving objects, difficult to wake up, not eating or grooming)
- signs of maladaptive (abnormal) behaviour such as:
  - repetitive behaviours (i.e., pacing, over-licking, on-going kneading, digging motion with paws but against a wall)
  - self-mutilation
  - eating or sucking non-edible material

It is important to reduce an animal's stress as much as possible when they are in the care of your pet program. Here are a few tips on how you and others can help animals to cope during a difficult time:

- Cats feel most comfortable up high in small spaces. The SPCA branches have "hide and perch" boxes that were developed specifically to give cats comfort and reduce their stress.
- Encourage women to bring something of the animal's with them when they leave home, such as a favorite toy or blanket. This will bring comfort to an animal that is taken out of its environment.
- If possible when transporting cats and small dogs you should use proper crates.
- Once you have an animal and you are deciding where he/she should stay, you should consider the environment that they are used to and, as much as possible, you should try to duplicate this environment. For example, if a dog is used to being in the house with its family, if possible you should not keep this dog outside by itself.

*The information provided above regarding cats and dogs experiencing emotional distress was obtained from the BC SPCA's Operational Bulletin #19A & #19B, March, 1997(revised January 2002).*

## ***PETS AND RENTAL HOUSING***

A common concern that was brought up by SPCA branches, veterinarians and transition houses when looking at boarding pets of women in transition was that, if the women were unable to find suitable rental housing that allowed pets, they would be forced to abandon them. The fear would then be that these pets would be the responsibility of whoever was boarding them.

At this time in BC there are no laws preventing landlords from discriminating against potential tenants with pets. Only 5% of rentals allow dogs and 9% allow cats. This forces many people to leave their much-loved animals behind. "About 12% of the animals in BC SPCA shelters (approximately 5,000 animals) are there because their guardians were unable to find housing that allowed pets" (BC SPCA website: [www.sPCA.bc.ca](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca), "Pets in Residential Housing").

In other provinces, legislation has been passed to ensure that people with companion animals would have the same opportunities to live in apartments and condominiums as those who do not have pets. Many groups have joined together to advocate for changes

to the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). “The BC SPCA strongly recommends that the BC Government amend the RTA to make no-pet clauses illegal in tenancy agreements, and grant people the right to care for companion animals in rental, condominium and strata housing. The public clearly supports such a change as evidenced by submissions to [the BC SPCA’s] recent Community Consultation process. [The BC SPCA] stands behind [Pets of BC Residents \(www.petsofbc.com\)](http://www.petsofbc.com), the leading advocacy group on this issue” (BC SPCA website: [www.sPCA.bc.ca](http://www.sPCA.bc.ca), “Pets in Residential Housing”).

In fall 2002, the government made a decision that the RTA should not be changed. That ruling allows landlords to continue to discriminate against tenants with companion animals. This has a direct and negative impact on the clients at transition houses who have companion animals. This decision also increases anxiety of groups or individuals who want to become involved with boarding pets for these women, as there is more of a chance that women will be forced to leave their pets behind because they are unable to find suitable housing that allows animals.

There are some steps that should be taken to ensure that women leaving abuse with their pets and whoever is boarding their pets have an agreement that meets both party’s needs. For example, a transition house or a foster family that is caring for animals should have a written contract with the women stating the exact conditions that have been agreed upon with regards to the care of the pets. Please see the section “Sample Forms”, for ideas and sample contracts for pet programs in SPCA branches, transition houses and with fosterers.

## ***Tips for Finding ‘Pet friendly’ Rental Accommodation***

*The following list was developed by the BC SPCA*

- Check notice boards or post an ad at pet-friendly places such as, pet supply stores, vet clinics or community centres.
- Try visiting real estate agencies and asking about rental property. You may want to try a “for free” rental agency but be cautious. Ask lots of questions before you pay any money.
- Do not mention over the phone that you have a pet. First, see if you like the place and the landlord likes you.
- Demonstrate to the landlord that you are a responsible pet owner. Show references and a pet resume. The resume describes your pet: license, vaccinations, spay/neuter information, obedience training, habits and socialization, and references (from landlords, neighbors, dog trainers, and veterinarians) to prove that he/she is well behaved. If the transition house has a partnership with the local SPCA, ask them to help you develop this.
- Determine what concerns the landlord may have about your pet and discuss them. Empathize – show you care about the landlord’s property.

- Suggest that the landlord and your pet meet at a later date.
- Explain how much your pet means to you and how that commitment will also make you a conscientious tenant.
- Show your willingness to have the landlord visit your place shortly after you move in so he/she can feel satisfied that your pet is well adjusted.

## ***HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES***

### ***Allergies***

Many transition houses expressed concerns about boarding pets in their shelters because of allergies to animals by both other families in the transition house and house staff. Antihistamines can be expensive; however, there are other options to look at. There are now many products that exist that can be given to the animals to lessen the effects of their dander on those with allergies. There are sprays and other medications that can be used which, in many cases, have been found to be effective. These solutions can be purchased at some veterinarians' offices and are available in most pet supply stores.

If you are able to form a relationship with your local pet supply store or veterinarian, this is something reasonable that you can ask them to provide for you at no charge, or at a wholesale price. These products will be very handy to keep on-hand in case you have a client with allergies and an animal that comes in and you have no choice but to keep the animal for a short time until other arrangements can be made. If these methods do not prove effective for the long-term, it will be important to have alternative plans for where the animals can stay. See the "Foster Programs" section for further details.

### ***Temperament of Abused Animals***

Animals of women leaving abusive relationships have often been abused themselves. Because of this, their behaviour and temperament can be impacted. Abuse may cause some animals to be more aggressive in certain circumstances and it can also cause them to have anxiety problems. For example, if a dog has been mistreated by a large, bearded man, it is likely that the animal will respond negatively if it is approached by *any* large, bearded man. The dog may become suddenly vicious or it may cower in fear. It is important that as much information as possible is given about the animal and its life up to the point it is brought to your program. **It is imperative that aggressive animals are identified before they are brought inside a transition house or to a foster home.**

The BC SPCA has developed a "Temperament Assessment Test" that they use on all the animals that stay in their shelters. This test is very effective in determining whether an animal is aggressive or not. Your local SPCA can conduct a temperament assessment

test on the animals you have staying at your transition house or that you have found foster homes for. If you do not have a local SPCA, you can contact the BC SPCA (see resources for contact information) and ask them for tips on how you can test an animal's temperament on your own.

You can also develop a questionnaire that can be completed by women, with questions such as: Has your animal ever displayed any aggressive behaviour towards people, children, or other animals? Has your animal ever bitten anyone or another animal? These questions will help to get some background information on the animal and will help to determine its temperament and whether it will be safe to have this animal in your transition house or foster program. Please see the "Legal Issues" and "Sample Forms" sections of this tool kit to view a sample questionnaire and learn more about your responsibilities and liabilities.

## *Healing Power of Animals*

For many people, a companion animal is their main source of comfort and support. Animals are always there for people, eager to please and often very conscious of when their family members are hurt, sad, angry or upset. "Companion animals help to reduce stress, alleviate depression, lower blood pressure, improve self-esteem, and of course, offer companionship to isolated individuals... Women have said that companion animals are often their only source of self-esteem and spiritual gratification" (Frederickson, 2001).

Companion animals can also provide stability and comfort in a child's life when other aspects of life are uncertain and their family is in crisis. Abusers often use the safety of pets as leverage with both women and children, leaving many children feeling responsible for the well-being of their pets. This causes many kids to carry with them to a shelter an intense fear and stress.

Lori, who worked as a Children Who Witness Abuse counselor, shared that she often found pets were an important part of a child's life.

*"What I encountered time and time again was that, when tensions surmount at home, children often turn to their pets as friends to confide in, companions to be active with, and a warm shoulder to cry on. When children leave their homes, they often worry about the animals that are left behind. They have questions like 'Is Misty being fed? Has she been locked out of the house?' They also worry about their pets' feelings, and believe that they will be lonely and sad. Unfortunately, pets are also sometimes used as a method of control by abusers. They may threaten the well-being of an animal, or use the animal's condition as a way of encouraging the child to visit or encouraging the mom to return home. Children express longing to see their pets again, even if they do not feel comfortable visiting their father or step-father. The overall impact of leaving may be lessened for children if their pets are in a safe place (especially if they can visit*

*them), and if they do not have to fear for the safety of their friend and companion”.*

Being able to keep women and their children together with their pets during their time at a transition house is ideal for most families. However, if this is not possible, families will still take great comfort in just knowing that their animals are out of reach of their abusers, making any pet program your shelter can implement very valuable.

## ***Fear of Animals***

It is recommended that all of the families who are staying in the transition house be consulted to determine whether it will be suitable to have an animal stay in the house (even if the animal is being kept outside of the shelter, but on shelter premises). There are some people who have severe fears of dogs and/or cats and other animals. These people have entered the transition house to escape to a safe and comfortable haven. It is not recommended that animals be boarded at the transition house if it will create any fear or discomfort for other clients.

## ***Safety***

### ***Safety of Animals***

Children who witness the abuse of their companion animals are more likely to commit violence against these animals themselves. One study found that an alarming one third of animal abusers are children who come from violent homes (Quinn, 2000). Transition houses that are looking at having pets on-site should take this into consideration. A worker should discuss with children how animals should be treated. Mothers should also be notified that it is common for children who witness abuse to become violent towards their animals. The children should then be monitored whenever they are interacting with companion animals to ensure that the pets are kept safe. This will also be an opportunity for children to learn, by a new example, how animals should really be treated, as opposed to what they may have previously been exposed to.

If a child is seen hurting an animal, an adult should intervene immediately and remove the animal from the situation. An assessment of the child should be conducted by the child care worker or children who witness abuse counselor (where available), and the incident should be documented. If your transition house does not have a child care worker or children who witness abuse counselor, you can recommend to the child's mother that she seek an assessment from an outside counselor or psychologist.

All children who abuse animals need help as soon as possible. “The American Psychological Association lists animal cruelty as one of the behavioural signs of conduct

disorder. As a result, animal cruelty can be an early indication of a mental disorder in the earliest stages” (Arkow & Ascione, 1999).

“One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it” – Margaret Mead, Anthropologist.

## ***Safety of People***

*All of the information in this section was provided by the BC SPCA.*

The vast majority of dogs are safe, reliable companions. But even a friendly dog may bite if threatened, angry, afraid or hurt. The reality is that most dog bites are from dogs known to the victim, either the family dog or neighbour's dog. It is often through play that excites the dog that most dog bites occur. So it is very important that children are always in the company of an adult when they are around animals.

Just as humans do, dogs protect things they care about, whether it is their food, puppies, or favourite toys. They also protect spaces—their own and their guardians'. Eating and sleeping areas, yards, porches, and parked cars are all commonly defended by dogs. Even a dog in a new environment can be territorial. A child reaching through a fence or arriving unannounced at the door can turn a warm, loyal pet into a growling, aggressive protector. Dogs provide us with protection. We must ensure that children understand this and are aware of situations that may frighten or anger a dog.

## ***Reasons Dogs May Bite***

- Cornering, crowding or standing over a dog, particularly a small one, may make it feel defensive. Children should stand back and never put their faces close to a dog's mouth. The face is the most common site of serious dog bite injuries.
- Sick or injured dogs may be afraid or irritable and should be avoided by children.
- Elderly dogs may have impaired vision or hearing, or more sensitive to touch which can cause them to be more easily startled.
- Most children's dog bite injuries occur during play with a dog they know. A dog that is excited or nervous can bite by mistake. Children should be taught not to play fight, tease, yell at, or chase dogs or other animals.

## ***Things to Remember with Dogs (and All Animals)***

- Ask permission before petting someone else's dog.
- Leave mother animals and their young alone.
- Do not try to pet dogs that are tied up, sleeping, eating, behind fences, or in vehicles.
- Do not chase or tease dogs, or pull their ears or tails.
- Do not grab their food, bones or toys.
- Do not try to stop a fight. Call an adult for help.
- Always act kindly and gently. Animals have feelings too.
- Remember that cats can bite and scratch unexpectedly.

The above points are intended to help you keep the residents, especially children, safe at your transition house while you have animals staying with you. It may be suitable to post this list in your transition house where everyone can see it. Please see the "Legal Issues" section of this tool kit to learn about liability and responsibility of your transition house if someone is bit.

## *Health*

SPCA branches and veterinary offices that are involved in boarding pets may require that either the animals have all their vaccinations up-to-date and be spayed or neutered, or that they vaccinate and spay/neuter the animals themselves. Animals being exposed to other animals that are not spayed/neutered or have not had their vaccinations are at risk of becoming pregnant or sick. A veterinarian or SPCA shelter will not want to take any chances of harming other animals. This is why, depending on the facilities, some shelters and vets may make it imperative that animals meet certain health requirements.

Some animals may have fleas and/or worms. If you are housing pets at your transition house, you should plan ahead to deal with this problem so that it can be avoided. The most effective methods of controlling fleas include the Program or Advantage medications, both of which are available for dogs and cats. Program is administered orally and prevents eggs from hatching but will not kill fleas. It is best used for preventing fleas, not controlling a flea problem. Advantage is administered topically to a small area of the animal's fur and it will kill the fleas. You can get either of these flea control methods from a veterinarian. They range in price from \$45-\$65 (for 4-6 months worth of treatments).

Some animals may have worms that should be treated. Some types of worms which are found in animals can be seen in their stool. Other types can only be viewed through a microscope. “Most worm infestations cause any or all of these symptoms: diarrhea, perhaps with blood; weight loss; dry hair; general poor appearance; and vomiting, perhaps with worms in the vomit” (www.ThePetCenter.com, 2002). If you determine that an animal has worms, it should be taken to a veterinarian to be given the proper treatment. Some types of intestinal worms can be passed from animals to people. These parasites can be dangerous to a person’s health, which is why it is very important to take care of a worm infestation immediately.

## ***LEGAL ISSUES***

Although transition house workers cannot be expected to know the law extensively, there are legal issues to be aware of. Once you have developed a pet policy, it is worth asking a lawyer to review the policy, as well as any forms or waivers, to ensure that you are protected from liability as best as possible. In addition, it is important to be aware of potential issues for the sake of women staying at the transition house. Following are the key legal issues to be aware of.

### ***Ownership of Animals***

Under Canadian law, animals are still seen as the property of those they live with, making people with pets the animals’ ‘owners’. Some animals may be registered, such as in the case of a purebred pet. Some purebreds may also be subject to contracts with breeders, whereby the owners are required to make them available for breeding or for show purposes. Non domestic animals may also be valuable and may be subject to registration or breeding contracts. If an animal is registered under the abuser’s name, the animal is technically owned by the abuser. If you have a pet program in your transition house you should be aware of this in case something were to happen to the animal because you do not want to be held responsible or liable.

Even if an animal is not registered or subject to a contract with a breeder, ownership is an important issue to keep in mind. In a situation where there are no ownership papers, a woman may take her pet with her when leaving the relationship. However, it is possible that the abusive partner may later try to claim it is his pet, and may seek to have a court order that it be returned. It is not known how often this occurs, however women who are entering the transition house can be given some tips as to how they can defend their position that they are the true owners of their pets. **If** a woman leaves an abusive

relationship with her pets, her partner **may try to** fight for the animals, stating that he owns them. **He** may be in a situation where he **has** signed the papers, **or** purchased the pet, and **he may have** paid for the majority of veterinary visits. What women should know is that commonly in a court dispute over animals, a judge will rule that the owner of the pet is the person who is his/her primary caregiver.

In 70% of homes, women are the ones who feed and care for the animals as well as take them to their veterinary visits (**get source from Craig**). If a woman can prove that she has cared for an animal more than her partner, regardless of who originally paid for the animal, she has a good chance of gaining custody of the pet.

Women should also be encouraged to document any incidents of abuse against their companion animals. Veterinary records can be used in some cases but if a woman keeps track of all abuse, even when it seems minor, it will aid in making a stronger case for her if she has to fight for custody of her companion animal.

If your local SPCA is boarding pets of women leaving abuse, it may be possible for them to take ownership of the animal while the animals are housed there. In high risk situations where there is great concern that an abuser will come looking for his family's companion animal, the SPCA can declare ownership of the animal, giving them the authority to deny access and retrieval of the pet by the abuser. This has come up on occasion at the Nanaimo SPCA shelter, where the situations were resolved without police involvement. Every time this has come up, the abuser was told that, at that time, the animal was the property of the SPCA and then he was asked to leave the premises before they called the police. Nothing more came of these incidents.

## ***Spaying and Neutering Companion Animals***

Most likely ownership will only come up as an issue if the animal is used for breeding. If you have a partnership with an animal agency that requires animals be spayed or neutered or that offers to do these procedures for free, the issue of ownership should be discussed prior to any alterations of the animal.

## ***Intake forms***

If you are going to have a pet program, it is advisable that you develop an intake form. There are two potential benefits to this: 1) It will give you an opportunity to gather important information about the animals and their histories, 2) **This intake form should also** act as a contract with the woman entering your shelter.

This intake form will help to protect your transition house from any potential liability, by identifying potential concerns about the pet. It can include information about the pet's medical history, including vaccinations, if she/he is spayed/neutered, etc. It can also include questions about the animal's temperament, for example, has the animal ever

bitten another animal or person, especially a child? Has the animal ever been abused? If yes, was the animal ever taken to a veterinarian as a result?

This intake form can also set out, in clear terms, what the responsibilities of the transition house and the pet owner are in regard to the animal. This intake form will then also act as a contract with the woman entering the shelter. For example, ideally the **your** intake form should also have a section that the woman will sign stating that she will take responsibility for her pet(s) once she has left the transition house, regardless of whether her pet is being boarded at the SPCA, a veterinarian's office, a foster home, or within your shelter. It should also state that if she does not re-claim her pet by a specified date (i.e., 2 weeks after she has left the transition house), it will become the property of the local SPCA, who then has the authority to give the animal up for adoption. Please see the enclosed intake form for more suggested questions you can include.

## ***Liability Waivers***

If you decide to implement a pet program for your transition house, it may be advisable to have those who might come into contact with the pets sign liability waivers. For example, if the pets are kept at the transition house, then all women coming into the house would sign waivers. On the other hand, if pets are kept at foster homes coordinated by the transition house, then those living at the "foster home" would sign waivers (for "foster homes" organized by the SPCA, whether or not to have "foster parents" sign waivers is the SPCA's responsibility). A lawyer should assist in drafting the liability waiver.

## ***Insurance***

While you are still at the stage of deciding whether or not to allow women to bring pets to the transition house, it is worth checking your insurance policy to make sure that you will be properly covered. If you have any questions about your insurance policy coverage, your insurance agent should be able to answer them.

## ***SAMPLE FORMS***

# ***Sample Questions for the Intake Form of a Transition House Boarding Pets On-Site***

The following questions are intended to give you some ideas of the information that you may need when a woman is bringing a pet into your transition house. You can use any of these questions to incorporate into your existing intake form. You may also want to use them to guide workers through conversations with women who are in crisis and seeking help for themselves and their pets.

## ***Sample Questions***

- Do you have any pets at home?
- How many pets do you have?
- What kind of pets do you have?
- Do you fear for the safety of your pets?
- If yes, has your partner threatened to harm your pets?
- What were the threats made?
- Have your pets been abused by your partner in the past?
- Please describe the abuse and any injuries sustained:
  
- Have you made any arrangements for your pets while you are staying in the transition house?
- If yes, where are they staying?
- Have your pets been spayed or neutered?
- Are your pets' vaccinations up-to-date?

- Are your pets in good physical health?
- If no, what health problems do your pets have?
- Have any of your pets ever displayed aggression towards:  
Children:      Adults:      Other Animals:
- Do you have your pet's medical records with you?
- Any additional comments about your pets:

## ***Safety Plan***

If you are unable to implement a program for pets of abused women in your community, you may still be able to help them think of a safe person who can care for their pets. If a client can think of someone who can take her pets, make sure to include her companion animals in the safety plan that you develop together. Feeling supported in her fears for the safety of her animals will make her feel better, even if an official pet program is not in place for her.

## ***Sample Volunteer Agreement and Release Form***

British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – Volunteer Agreement & Release Form

In consideration of being permitted to participate in the Volunteer Programs of the BC SPCA, I, the undersigned, agree to assume all risk of loss or injury, including death, to myself or damage to my property while on any of the premises of the BC SPCA including its shelters and hospital, and elsewhere while participating in any volunteer program, and hereby release and waive any right of action I presently have or may in the future acquire against the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and their heirs, assigns, servants, agents or volunteers for any such loss or injury, even though such loss or injury is caused by the negligence or default of the BC

SPCA, its servants, agents or its volunteers, whether acting in scope of employment or not.

I acknowledge that the animals of the BC SPCA are not trained by BC SPCA and that they can be unpredictable and dangerous. I also acknowledge the BC SPCA strongly recommends I keep current my tetanus and rabies immunizations, and to consult with my physician about his and any other concerns relating to working with animals. If I have any reason to suspect that I am pregnant, BC SPCA recommends I may wish to ask my physician about working with cats.

I hereby waive for my personal representatives and dependents all such claims or rights of action aforementioned that the undersigned or my personal representative and dependents may herein have against the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, their heirs, assigns, servants, agents and volunteers.

By my signature and seal I acknowledge that I am of the full age and that I have read this release and have voluntarily accepted it.

I also acknowledge that the Senior Staff person present is in full and total charge of the facility.

In consideration of being permitted to participate in the Volunteer Programs of the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA), I, the undersigned have read and agree to abide by the guidelines:

1. Duties and Obligations for Board Members, Volunteers and Staff.
2. Ethics and Behaviour for Staff
3. Ethics and Behaviour for Board Members
4. Conflict of Interest.

By my signature and seal I acknowledge that I am of the full age and that I have read in detail the document containing the guidelines and have voluntarily accepted it.

Dated at: \_\_\_\_\_, British Columbia, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200

Signature  
(Parents/Guardians for all minors)

Printed Name

Address: Street, City, Province, Postal Code

Phone Number: ( )

Over 19 Years of Age (Y/N)

***BC SPCA Foster Parent Questionnaire***

Name of Foster Parent:

Date:

Address:

Home Phone:

Work Phone:

Best Time to Contact:

Driver's License #

Are you over 21?

Are you prepared to submit a criminal records check?

How were you informed about this volunteer opportunity?  
Newspaper, website, newsletter, poster, other.

Why do you want to be a Volunteer Foster Parent?  
To help Animals, to learn more about caring for animals, other.

How much time do you have to foster?

Number of weeks: 1-2, 2-3, 3-6, 6-9 weeks

Hours per day: 1-2, 2-4, 4-6, 6-8 hours

Type of Foster Animal	Minimum Daily Hrs.
Cats	1-2 hours
Kittens with Mom	2-3 hours
Dogs (Sm/Med/Lg)	1-3 hours
Puppies with Mom	3-4 hours

Please List Any Pets in Your Household:

Are they Spayed or Neutered?

Are they Currently Vaccinated?

Have they had Kennel Cough Vaccine?

## ***Fostering Animals – Agreement Form***

The following is an agreement between the BC SPCA – Vernon & District Branch and the Vernon Transition House:

## ***Vernon Transition House – Fostering Animals***

- 1) When required, the BC SPCA – Vernon & District Branch will provide foster care for all animals owned by women who must seek shelter at the Vernon Transition House.
- 2) The BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch will provide all food, litter and emergency medical needs of the animals to be fostered at no cost to the animal owner.
- 3) Foster care for all animals will be for a maximum of thirty (30) days only.
- 4) A signed ANIMAL SURRENDER FORM must be completed and submitted to the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch when each animal to be fostered is received by the shelter. The surrender process of an animal WILL NOT commence until a period of 30 days had elapsed and the owner of the animal cannot be contacted or located. Under special circumstances and only at the discretion of the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch's Shelter Manager, the thirty day period may be extended to accommodate the special needs of the animal owner.
- 5) The animal owner must sign a release stipulating the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch and/or the person(s) fostering the animal(s) will not be held responsible for the possible escape and loss of the animal(s) and any injury, diseases, sickness and damage the animal(s) may suffer or cause while the said animal(s) are in the care of the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch.
- 6) If the owner of an animal cannot be contacted or located after thirty days have elapsed, the animal(s) in question become the property of the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch and may be dealt with in accordance with the policies of the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch.
- 7) All animals fostered by virtue of this agreement will be taken into the custody of the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch from the property of the Vernon Transition House. This arrangement serves to circumvent safety issues and conflict that may tend to surface and involve the abusive spouse at the former residence of the animal owner.
- 8) Animals will be picked up by the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch anytime during regular working hours, Monday to Saturday between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00pm. At all other times, the animal(s) are to be kept in the Vernon Transition House garage as previously agreed on until arrangements can be made to transfer the animal(s) to the SPCA shelter.
- 9) The BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch will provide caging facilities and food for the animals that are kept at the Vernon Transition House on a temporary basis until animals can be transported to the shelter or foster home.
- 10) Animals will only be returned to the animal owner who requested the animal(s) to be fostered by the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch. No other person may claim the animal(s).

- 11) Should the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch be full to capacity, carefully selected foster families will be used to shelter the animals. Complete confidentiality will be maintained – animal owners WILL NOT be allowed to visit the animals at the foster family's home; in cases of extenuating circumstances, arrangements may be made to have the animal(s) transported back to the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch shelter where the owner will be allowed to visit.

## ***Vernon Transition House Animal Surrender Form***

Animal Identification Numbers:

Date:

Received by:

Breed:        Dog ( )        Cat ( )        Other ( )

Gender:       Male ( )       Female ( )

Altered:      Yes ( )        No ( )

Description: Primary Colour:

Secondary Colour:

Name:

Age:

Animal Surrender Conditions:

Condition One: I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I am presently residing at the Vernon Transition House and that I am the legal owner of the above described animal. I request that the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch care for my animal for a maximum of thirty days from the above date while I am a tenant at the Vernon Transition House.

Condition Two: If after the maximum period of thirty days I am not in a position to have my animal returned to me or I am unable to make other arrangements for the animal's care, I voluntarily agree to surrender the animal to the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch and fully understand the animal described above becomes the sole property of the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch.

Condition Three: I further agree not to hold the BC SPCA - Vernon & District Branch responsible in any manner whatsoever should my animal escape and become lost, become sick, injured, diseased or have to be disposed of in a humane manner due to sickness, injury or disease.

I have read the three conditions of this agreement in full and my signature shown below acknowledges my full understanding of their content.

Signature:

Animal Owner's Name:  
Address:  
Contact Phone Number  
Alternate Phone Number:

## ***SUCCESSFUL PET PROGRAMS***

*The intention of this section is to provide some examples of pet programs that have been successful in caring for the animals of women in transition houses. There are other great programs in BC and Yukon that were not listed here.*

### ***Haven: A Society for Women and Children***

The Nanaimo SPCA shelter has had a relationship with Haven: A Society for Women and Children for over seven years. The SPCA cares for all of the pets of the women staying at the transition house. Most often these pets are boarded at the SPCA shelter. They have a private secluded kennel within their facility which is not in public view. They also have an outdoor area which is hidden from the street where dogs can be exercised. They encourage women and their children to visit their animals as much as they like.

Women are asked to sign a waiver stating that they will notify the SPCA if they need their animals to be cared for longer than 30 days. As long as they are told by the woman that she needs her companion animals boarded for a longer time, they will do their best to accommodate them. This shelter does not require that animals come in with up-to-date vaccinations, and will provide vaccinations at no cost if it is requested.

The Nanaimo SPCA's shelter is staffed from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm. They will pick companion animals up from the transition house and transport them to the safety of their shelter during their hours of operation. If women arrive at Haven House in the middle of the night with pets, they keep them at the transition house until the morning. Although the SPCA is only open to the public from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm, transition house clients are able to visit their animals at any time between 8:30 am and 6:00 pm. This gives the women and their children the opportunity to visit with their animals at more flexible times and gives them more privacy from the public.

### ***Kootenay Haven***

The staff at Kootenay Haven have an intense love for animals and they work hard to accommodate the needs of all of their clients, including the families' companion animals.

Kootenay Haven is one of the only shelters that allows dogs, cats and other small pets (hamsters, birds, etc) to stay within their transition house with the families.

Kootenay Haven has set up kitty litter for cats in a room in the house and they have a fenced yard where dogs can run around. They allow pets to roam freely throughout the house. If ever a woman and/or children enter the shelter and have allergies, they make alternative arrangements for any pets in the house. In these cases, companion animals are often sent to the local SPCA where they can be boarded for a small cost. They do not allow aggressive or dangerous animals of any kind. They have never had any health or safety issues arise with regards to their pet program.

Kootenay Haven has support from a local pet supply store which provides them with food and treats for the animals.

They enjoy having companion animals in their transition house and feel that it is therapeutic for the women and children who are staying there. They encourage staff to bring their dogs to work with them as well.

## ***Passage House***

In Smithers, there are no services for animals except for private kennels. In response to their lack of community resources and to meet the needs of clients, Passage House, with financial support from the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada, constructed sheltered runs for the dogs of women residing at their transition house. They can hold up to two dogs at one time including one large dog and one small dog. The sheltered runs are insulated against cold weather and are surrounded by a wire fence. Women are asked to provide food and supplies for their dogs and they are responsible for exercising their own animals.

Passage House does not require that dogs are spayed or neutered or that they have up-to-date vaccinations because the animals are always kept separate from each other and they do not enter the transition house. It is requested that animals be of good health with no infectious conditions. Each run is sanitized after the pet has vacated.

Passage House has had no security or confidentiality problems with regards to their pet program. They have had no noise problems or complaints from neighbors. They have included a section in their intake form for women to provide some information on their dogs, such as health of the animal.

## ***Vernon Transition House***

The transition house in Vernon has a similar arrangement with their local SPCA shelter as the transition house in Nanaimo. The Vernon SPCA shelter will take animals for up to 30 days and boards them at the shelter. They have never fostered any of these animals and prefer to keep them at the shelter. They haven't had any farm animals needing care yet, but stated that they would be able to foster those larger animals. They have a contract and pet surrender form that all women must complete before pets will be accepted.

The Vernon Transition House initiated this program and they are very happy with the results. The SPCA has even provided them with animal crates in case companion animals come into their shelter in the middle of the night when the SPCA is closed.

These two organizations have taken their partnership one step further and involved the SPCA in their Children Who Witness Abuse Program. The CWWA group members have the benefit of regular visits from dogs and cats to their program. The children are taught about animal care and the importance of respecting animals by SPCA staff members.

## ***RESOURCES***

### ***British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA)***

The BC SPCA is a not-for-profit society organized under the provincial Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. This act enables the Society to provide services through its Administration Centre, Branches/Shelters and Agents. The BC SPCA's mission is to prevent cruelty to, and promote the welfare of, animals.

#### **BC SPCA Administration Centre**

1245 East 7th Avenue

Vancouver, BC V5T 1R1

Tel: (604) 681-7271 (1-800-665-1868 outside the Lower Mainland)

Fax: (604) 681-7022

E-mail: [info@spca.bc.ca](mailto:info@spca.bc.ca)

Website: [www.spca.bc.ca](http://www.spca.bc.ca)

### ***BC SPCA Shelter Branches***

To contact the BC SPCA shelter in your community, visit the BC SPCA website: [www.spca.bc.ca](http://www.spca.bc.ca), or consult your local telephone directory.

### ***British Columbia Veterinary Medical Association (BCVMA)***

The British Columbia Veterinary Medical Association promotes the well-being of animals in British Columbia. The Association is committed to serving the public by

regulating the proficiency, competency and ethical behaviour of its members and by ensuring that acceptable standards of veterinary practice are maintained.

British Columbia Veterinary Association

Suite 155, 1200 - W 73rd Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6P 6G5

Office Hours: 9:00am - 5:00pm

Tel: (604) 266-3441

Toll Free in BC: 1-800-463-5399

Fax: (604) 266-8447

Website: [www.bcvma.org](http://www.bcvma.org)

### ***The Latham Foundation***

Founded in 1918, the Latham Foundation is a clearinghouse for information about: humane issues and activities; the human companion animal bond (HCAB); animal-assisted therapy; and the connections between child and animal abuse and other forms of violence. The Latham Foundation also produces and distributes affordable videos and publications on the above topics. They publisher the ***Latham Letter*** and are the creators and sponsors of the "**Search for Excellence**" Video Awards.

Latham Plaza Bld., 1826 Clement Avenue

Alameda, CA 95401

Tel: (510) 521-0920

Fax: (510) 521-9861

Email: [info@Latham.org](mailto:info@Latham.org) Website: [www.latham.org](http://www.latham.org)

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