



VANCOUVER HUMANE SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

OVERVIEW

2009 was a year of continuing success . As well as focusing on our key projects, significant work was accomplished in the areas of succession planning and capacity building. VHS continues to build credibility in the community and all of us, Directors, Staff and Volunteers, are working hard to ensure that the organization will continue to be an effective voice for animals in the future.

KEY PROJECTS

Farm Animal Welfare

Chicken OUT!

VHS's Chicken OUT! campaign made great strides during the year in the effort to end the suffering of egg-laying hens confined in battery cages.

Cage Free Egg Purchasing Policies

a) Cage Free Councils

In February and June of 2009, the Metro Vancouver Regional District and the City of Burnaby respectively adopted cage-free purchasing policies for their city-run food venues. This brings the total of cage-free BC communities to 15.

In a related issue, in March, VHS spoke in opposition to the motion before Vancouver Council to allow backyard hens in urban residential neighbourhoods. We cited many concerns regarding irresponsible owners and enforcement issues, as did the SPCA. We encouraged Council instead to ask the provincial and federal authorities to find ways to transition battery production to certified cage-free as a solution to the growing demand for eggs from "naturally raised hens".

Unfortunately, Council passed the motion. However, VHS was asked to contribute to and review the City's guidelines for the humane keeping of backyard hens in order to minimize negative repercussions to animal welfare. There was significant coverage in the media (print, tv, and radio) about the decision and its repercussions (see "Media Coverage" below).

b) Cage Free Campuses

VHS added 3 more universities – Brock University, Carleton University and the University of Victoria - to the list of cage-free campuses, bringing the total to 15 in

Canada. Several more universities and colleges across Canada have contacted VHS with plans to go cage-free in 2010.

c) Cage Free Chefs

VHS continued our outreach to chefs and restaurants in Vancouver, starting with a meeting with the BC Chef's Table Society in February. The Chef's Table Society is comprised of some of Vancouver's most high-profile chefs and restaurant owners, and they were supportive of our message to use and promote cage-free eggs on menus and at cooking shows and events. As a result of that meeting, VHS was contacted by the owner/founder of Terra Breads to help them source higher-welfare, free-run eggs for use in all their baked goods.

VHS also initiated a letter writing campaign to Vancouver and Burnaby restaurants serving eggs asking them to switch to cage-free eggs (honouring cities' resolutions), and if they already serve free-run eggs, to consider switching to certified organic eggs. VHS has been building a directory of restaurants that serve cage-free eggs which we then promote on our web site and provide to anyone who requests it. The directory now includes over 30 cage-free restaurants in the Metro Vancouver area, with more being added every day.

Government and Industry Initiatives

a) BC Government

VHS met with three representatives of the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands – the Deputy Minister, the Chair of the Farm Industry Review Board and the Director of the Industry Competitiveness Branch – to discuss market gaps and obstacles in BC's egg industry. Attending with VHS was the owner of Rabbit River Farms, BC's first and largest producer and grader of certified organic and SPCA certified eggs. Our message was well-received and the lines of communication were kept open for further discussion and inclusion in policy decisions. As a result of this meeting, a subsequent meeting was arranged with the BC Egg Marketing Board.

b) BC Egg Marketing Board

VHS and Rabbit River met with the Chair of the BC Egg Marketing Board to reiterate discussion points from our meeting with the Ministry, and to negotiate a manageable transition plan and timeframe for BC egg farmers to move from caged to cage-free eggs. An agreement was made to transition 25,000 layers immediately, with more to come in the next 3 years. Unfortunately the commitment was not met by the end of 2009. VHS continues to raise awareness with the public, government and industry stakeholders directly and through the media.

c) Egg Farming Community

VHS initiated an outreach campaign to the egg farming community, sending letters/emails and making phone calls to 100% cage-free farms across Canada. We informed them of our campaign's mission and requested their permission to list them in a directory of cage-free farms. Many requests for this list have been received from visitors to our web site.

Media Coverage

The decision by Metro Vancouver to adopt a cage-free egg purchasing policy led to significant media coverage, with 5 BC newspapers (The Province, Vancouver Sun, Georgia Straight, Surrey Leader, Richmond Review) covering the story. The Sun also requested that we write an Op Ed in rebuttal to a negative piece written by Sun Columnist Harvey Enchin about Metro's decision.

Another Op Ed – this time concerning the backyard chicken decision by Vancouver City Council – was featured in the online version of the Georgia Straight. VHS and Chicken OUT! were also featured in the Langara Voice, as well as in radio interviews for CBC Radio, Animal Voices Radio, and TV interviews for CTVBC, Global National, Global Vancouver and Shaw Community Programming.

Advertising

Thanks to a generous donor, VHS was able to place an Ad on the back of 10 BC Transit buses. The ad ran for 8 weeks and stated "Cages are Cruel! Buy certified organic eggs instead".

Presentations

VHS, together with the BC SPCA, was invited by UBC's Faculty of Land and Food Systems to present to students in their 2nd and 3rd year courses "Animals in Society" and "Animal Welfare and the Ethics of Animal Use".

Events

In total, Chicken OUT! staff and volunteers attended 22 tradeshow exhibitions, events and farmer markets during 2009. The most significant audience was at the Vancouver Pride Parade, where 600,000 people were in attendance. A VHS donor drove his vintage 1947 Chrysler Town and Country "Woodie" as the float. The float was colourfully decorated with paper flowers, "Cages are Cruel" signs and of course our mascot Henny sat atop the roof. Eight VHS representatives walked the parade route. Other major events where we promoted Chicken OUT! included the Vancouver Wellness Show and EAT Vancouver, where 35,000 and 31,000 people were in attendance respectively.

Grants

Chicken OUT! received a significant grant from the Vancouver Foundation, confirming the campaign's value as an effective animal welfare initiative. Smaller grants were also received from Canadians for the Ethical Treatment of Food Animals (CETFA) and Humane Society International/Canada (HSI/Canada).

Conferences

Thanks to funding from CETFA, a VHS representative attended an international conference on Global Trade and Farm Animal Welfare. The two-day conference was held in Brussels and hosted by the European Commission, the RSPCA, Compassion in World Farming, WSPA and EuroGroup for Animals. More than 400 people representing

55 countries attended. The conference provided an incredible learning experience and an excellent opportunity to network with many allies.

Outreach materials

Thanks to funding from the Vancouver Foundation, Chicken OUT! got a complete makeover. In addition to a new website and logo, we updated our old event signs and banners, brochures and egg label shopping guides. We also translated the Chicken OUT! brochure and egg label shopping guides into Mandarin in order to reach this important growing demographic of Vancouver.

Public Opinion Poll

Thanks to a grant from Canadians for the Ethical Treatment of Food Animals and in collaboration with the BC SPCA, VHS commissioned Harris/Decima Research to conduct a telephone poll of 2000 Canadians to determine their attitudes toward farming in general and battery cage eggs specifically. Results showed the majority of Canadians are opposed to battery cages, with 63% indicating they would support a ban on battery cages for their province, and 72% saying they are willing to pay more for humanely produced food. The poll also reported that 10% of Canadians and 21% of British Columbia

Eat Less Meat

As a contributor to the Community of Interest blog in the Vancouver Sun, VHS posted three articles on the problems with meat production: Pharmaceutical cruelty in your ham sandwich, Meatless Monday comes to Vancouver, and Scientist raises alarm over pollution from factory farming.

We also provided information for a presentation to the Vancouver Food Policy Council on Meatless Mondays (by Eleanor Boyle). The presentation had input from VHS, Earthsave Canada, Liberation BC, BCSPCA, Canadians for Ethical Treatment of food animals and the David Suzuki Foundation.

Because there were other groups doing significant work on Eat Less Meat, VHS decided to change the focus of this project to Eat Less Chicken in the future, in order to address the extreme numbers of animals and amount of suffering in the chicken meat industry. (600,000,000 chickens are raised and slaughtered in Canada each year.)

Animals in Entertainment

Rodeo

In July, VHS publicly called for a ban on calf-roping at the Calgary Stampede rodeo and launched a public education campaign on animal welfare problems at the Stampede, including newspaper and radio advertising, posters, news releases and direct communication with the Stampede's corporate sponsors.

The campaign attracted substantial media attention, locally and nationally, with nearly 40 different pieces of media coverage, including CBC TV's The National, CTV National, Global TV Calgary, Globe and Mail, Reuters, Canadian Press, Calgary Herald, Calgary Sun, CBC Radio, Vancouver Sun, CBC Early Edition and various community and specialist press. VHS also had anti-rodeo opinion editorials published in the Edmonton Journal and the Georgia Straight (online).

Although many rodeo supporters were displeased with VHS's position, the campaign attracted considerable public support in Calgary and across the country. (VHS received 36 positive emails, several supportive phone calls and numerous positive comments in online media.)

VHS's campaign also enlisted support from the world's leading ethical travel company, UK-based ResponsibleTravel.com, which carried a warning to travelers about the inhumane treatment of animals at the Stampede and other rodeos.

Meeting with Stampede chairman: In October, the chairman of the Calgary Stampede's board of directors came to Vancouver to meet with VHS staff. Calf-roping and other animal welfare issues at the Stampede were discussed – a dialogue that is ongoing.

VHS also wrote to the Abbotsford Agrifair and its sponsors, urging that the fair's Mighty Fraser Rodeo eliminate four events because of animal welfare concerns.

Exotic Animals

In November VHS and Zoocheck Canada exposed allegations by a group of current and former staff at the Mountain View Conservation and Breeding Centre in Langley that suggested the centre had neglected many of its animals and subjected some to cruelty. The allegations were carried in a front page story in the Vancouver Province and, subsequently, in numerous local and national media. The allegations prompted an investigation by the BC SPCA, during which two giraffes died at the centre from cold and poor diet, leading to further public concern.

(2010: A third giraffe at the centre died in February, 2010, during a procedure to treat neglected hooves. This led to a recommendation to Crown Counsel by the BC SPCA that the centre be charged with animal cruelty.)

The Mountain View case raised serious questions about the effectiveness of its accreditation with the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which the B.C. Ministry of Environment planned to use as a measure of animal welfare standards at provincial zoos. VHS brought this issue to the public's attention and made several representations to the ministry about the problem.

In April, VHS exposed the death of four zebras at the Greater Vancouver Zoo, sparking widespread media attention and public concern. The zebras died when a Cape buffalo was introduced into their enclosure, causing them to panic and, ultimately, to die of exertional myopathy (stress-related muscle damage). The incident was investigated by the BC SPCA but no charges were laid.

In August, VHS filed a complaint with the City of Vancouver concerning a Vancouver pet store illegally selling exotic animals (a lemur and several pig-nosed turtles), which led to the store being charged.

In September, VHS called for a public boycott of Petcetera stores over its decision to begin selling a range of exotic animals. The Vancouver Courier covered the issue and VHS's position.

Emergency Animal Assistance

We were again fortunate to have the opportunity to raise funds for emergency animal assistance via a matching grant from a generous private donor and from a continuation of the challenge from the James A. and Donna-Mae Moore Foundation.

In 2009, VHS spayed and neutered 145 cats, dogs and rabbits. More than \$79,000 was spent on emergency medical treatment for 288 needy animals, facilitated by VHS Director June Humphreys, who contributed over 700 volunteer hours. Conditions treated included broken bones, urinary tract blockages, cancer, accidental poisoning, ear mites, dental disease, intestinal blockages and diseases, parvovirus, and dozens of other problems.

GENERAL

Organizational Planning and Development

VHS ED Debra Probert undertook a year-long training course for executive directors, called the Executive Directors' Institute, through Volunteer Vancouver. The goal of this training was to assist the board with development and short- and long-term organizational planning issues.

As a result, the VHS board developed several organizational planning policies including a board recruitment policy and director application, and a governance document. All board policies were reviewed and updated, and work was begun on a review of our mission and vision statements.

As well, a special resolution was passed to change our bylaws. Our minimum number of directors was changed from five to four.

Communications with the community

Three newsletters were produced and distributed to supporters, libraries and various community locations, as well as being distributed at VHS events. In addition we sent two updates and a Christmas fundraising letter to our supporters.

We sponsor two websites: www.vancouverhumanesociety.bc.ca and www.chickenout.ca. These are kept up to date with the latest information on our work.

VHS sponsors an email alert list reaching over 450 people providing information on animal issues, related activities and opportunities to promote practical and positive change for animals.

Our projects and communications director Peter B. Fricker contributes regularly to the Community of Interest Blog on the Vancouver Sun website. Several of his articles have also been published in the print version of the newspaper.

Volunteers

Volunteers are a vital part of VHS. Including time spent at events, outreach, meetings, media, educational presentations, working directly with animals, etc., volunteers have contributed well over 3000 hours to VHS activities in 2009. The VHS directors are among our best volunteers.

Community Support

VHS staff and volunteers handle dozens of calls every week regarding animal issues. We provide advice on dealing with strays and/or feral cats, and spay/neuter issues and encourage individuals to take responsibility for the strays/ferals in their communities.

We also handle calls about animal cruelty and wildlife, directing people to the appropriate authorities and providing advice and contact information.

We occasionally assist smaller organizations with advice on obtaining funding, charitable status and structuring their organizations.

VHS continues to co-host Animal Voices radio program on Co-op Radio.

Educational Events, Presentations and Displays

VHS sponsored our annual Animal Rights Day downtown at the Art Gallery on August 9. Many other organizations attended and it was a successful event.

All other events were mentioned in Chicken Out! above.

Networking and Conferences

VHS continues to work closely with other organizations on a local, provincial and federal level to promote advancement on animal welfare issues. We continue to enjoy a productive working relationship with many organizations, including the BC SPCA, RestQ Sanctuary, Zoocheck Canada, HSI/Canada, Liberation BC and several others. VHS & the BCSPCA meet regularly to discuss common issues and strategies. VHS & RestQ Sanctuary again co-produced a rescued animals calendar, which proved to be very popular.

VHS & HSI/Canada work together on farm animal issues, in particular, coordinating battery hen initiatives in BC and across Canada. Canadians for the Ethical Treatment of Food Animals has been supportive of our Chicken Out! project.

Media

VHS had 6 op-ed pieces published in the Vancouver Sun, Georgia Straight online, the Edmonton Journal and the Toronto Star.

Peter Fricker, VHS's Communications and Program Director, was invited to contribute to the Vancouver Sun's Community of Interest blog on a regular basis.

Media coverage instigated by or including VHS was documented 115 times, including the following media outlets: CTV National News, CTV Calgary, CTV Vancouver, Global TV, Canada AM, Vancouver Province, Vancouver Sun, CBC TV, CBC Radio (English & French), Reuters News Service, Calgary Sun, Global National, Globe & Mail, and dozens of others.

VHS also had several letters to the editor published.

Administration

Staff

We were again fortunate to have funding approved for two full-time summer students, which meant we were able to do a considerable amount of outreach.

Our accounting and bookkeeping work continues to be ably dealt with by Loewen Kruse Chartered Accountants, a small, local firm which specializes in non-profits.

Our program staff, Peter Fricker and Leanne McConnachie, exhibit an extremely high standard of work with their expertise, dedication and commitment to promoting the VHS vision - a society in which humankind respects the inherent rights and needs of all animals, and in which animals are not exploited for human purposes.

In 2009, we expanded our admin position to full-time. Lauren Marten started at the end of March. She comes to VHS with extensive experience in non-profits and performs a range of duties including website maintenance, database management and donor relations - a welcome and valued member of our staff.

Directors

At our AGM in March, the following directors were elected:

Liberty Mulkani (President)
Laura Brown (Secretary)
June Humphreys (Director)
Chris Hajek (Treasurer)
Rebeka Breder (Director)