

# **SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

(In association with R.S.P.C.A. England) Patroness: LADY Y.P. McNEICE



FRIENDS FOR LIFE

29 September 2010

Your Letters  
Sunday Times

Dear Sirs,

I refer to the letter “Animal abusers need counseling” S.T. 26 September. The SPCA thanks the writer for providing her feedback and suggestions.

Several animal abuse cases have been spotlighted by the media in the past several months, both locally and internationally – these disturbing anti-social and cruel acts have caused death, and/or unnecessary stress and suffering to the animals involved.

A “misbehaving” dog, more often than not, is a result of an owner’s lack of understanding of his dog’s behavior and how it learns, and yes, obedience courses are strongly advised for dog owners.

Whilst we acknowledge that a fine or jail term may not correct the behavior of an animal abuser, the laws are in place for a reason (as with other crimes), and animals are protected against cruel treatment under the Animals & Birds Act.

The idea of compulsory work stints at animal welfare establishments – as much as this may seem a workable solution, we have to ask ourselves what is the objective? It may be a principled idea, but not so practical. If it is for the purpose of rehabilitation, in an adult it is probably not likely, as the imposition or forced attendance through a Corrective Work Order would probably not change the essence of who the abuser is. This is probably best assessed however on an individual basis, using psychological expertise in consultation with the animal welfare organisation.

The writer’s final suggestion of counseling should definitely be attempted. The SPCA has in the past recommended this to the authorities, and carried it out in several cases on youth abusers, where we educate and provide positive exposure. Whether or not our efforts have taken effect permanently, remains to be seen, as we are not experts in counseling and psychotherapy, which is what these offenders also need.

It is an established fact that there are serial killers who started their violent path, as young children – committing acts of violence on defenseless animals. Inherited traits aside, experiences in a child’s formative years are crucial in the development of a sound and normal mindset. Parental or sibling influences and treatment can have a significant effect on the child and their development. Once they start school, their influencing sphere expands to teachers and other students. Fostering or teaching a respect for animals to the young, (especially at primary level) should not only be a concern to animal welfare organisations - because cruel or criminal behavior, in any form can indicate a future potential threat to society.

Yours sincerely,

Deirdre Moss (Ms)  
Executive Director