

## Animal Cruelty on the Rise in Ontario

The Ontario SPCA has recently reported a substantial increase in the number of cruelty cases that have been dealt with by the Society in the recent years. The society reports that in 2003, 485 charges of cruelty were laid under the Criminal Code of Canada or the Animal Protection Act for Ontario, which represents an increase of 175% over the previous year. 176 charges were laid in 2002.

Similarly the Society reports that in 2003, 5,264 animals were seized or abandoned and taken into care by the Society and/or its affiliates.

*By far the majority of cases we prosecute involve neglect," says Ontario SPCA Chief Inspector Michael Draper. "In addition to cases involving often severe neglect of individual animals, the last year has seen many cases involving large numbers of animals - farm and exotic animals as well as companion animals. Thousands of dead and dying animals at a major pig farming operation, herds of emaciated cattle, 65 animals at an abandoned zoo, a case involving the seizure of 200 exotic animals, 39 sled dogs that needed care for over a year, and numerous puppy mills are just some of the welfare disasters we dealt with in 2003".*

The Canadian Farm Animal Care Trust has consistently recommended to the Ontario government that the Ontario SPCA Act should be strengthened to allow inspectors of the OSPCA and its affiliates to intervene in these cases of neglect **before** the animals have died or suffered from neglect. Clearly to avoid this suffering on the part of these animals, qualified and officially appointed inspectors should have the authority to intervene at an earlier stage of neglect than they are able to at present.

The Ontario SPCA is to be commended for their actions in prosecuting those responsible for this neglect and cruelty but their primary purpose as a Society is to prevent the cruelty from happening in the first place. To do this, the Society needs the authority and financial support from the Government of Ontario.

CanFACT letters to the Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Food have not prompted a response.