

MEDIA STATEMENT

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FIREWORKS

People who care about animals are bracing themselves for the annual onslaught of fireworks. It is the time of year that SPCAs dread. The suffering, trauma and frequently injuries to animals are preventable.

The opposition of the SPCA movement to fireworks cannot be linked to anything other than our commitment to prevent cruelty to animals. The SPCA movement is apolitical. We are obligated to stand firmly against anything which compromises the welfare of animals or causes cruelty.

The National Council of SPCAs (NSPCA) recognises and respects the cultural and religious practices – not limited to Hindus – which involve the use of light and we note the protection of them in terms of Act 108 of 1996: - namely the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Constitutional rights in this regard must be considered in the context that they are permissible only if the rights of others are not compromised and no laws are broken.

Hindu leader Ashwin Trikamjee stated on SABC 3's 3-TALK programme that Diwali was the festival of light and he emphasised that he himself opposed what he referred to as big bangs, saying they had no part in Diwali because they were not part of the tradition. The NSPCA notes that we hold in utmost respect the cardinal principles of Hinduism including compassion (*prani daya*). We can safely say that we share with them non-violence and respect for animal life.

The NSPCA submission to the Department of Explosives to propose changes to the relevant Act stated: - "We recognise the use of fireworks (light not sound) for religious purposes, Diwali being the classic example of this." Our proposal was that "The discharge of fireworks for religious purposes be limited to a certain part of the town, that residents and the animal welfare organisation(s) be notified in advance not only of the discharge of fireworks but of who will be present in the role of policing it."

Guy Fawkes has no place in the history of South Africa and should be relegated to where it belongs – colonial history.

The onus should not be placed upon animal owners. They are doing no wrong.

The effects of fireworks extend beyond domestic animals. It is currently nesting time. Horses, wild animals, small reptiles (they pick up vibrations) can all be affected.

It is time that responsibility was the order of the day and the law and by-laws strictly enforced.

A brochure on the laws relating to fireworks can be obtained by going to CONTACT US on www.nspca.co.za or by contacting the National Council of SPCAs on 011-907-3590.

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