

Press release

15 April 2009

SPCA's ongoing fight to prevent alleged animal abuse at Monkey Town

An exposé on Carte Blanche on Sunday 12 April highlighted the poor living conditions of some of the animals at Monkey Town near Sir Lowry's Pass outside of Cape Town. The programme featured interviews with Cape of Good Hope (COGH) SPCA Senior Wildlife Inspector, Kira Joshua who has been leading investigations into this establishment over the past 18 months.

In addition to the comments made by Senior Inspector Joshua on Sunday's programme, here follows additional details on the action taken by the COGH SPCA against Monkey Town since August 2007:

The COGH SPCA Inspectorate acted immediately after receiving the first complaint in August 2007. Senior Wildlife Inspector Kira Joshua conducted an inspection the next day and issued warnings to the owners to take the necessary remedial action. In terms of this warning, if improvements were not made they would face charges under the Animals Protection Act.

The SPCA carried out a follow up inspection and whilst the problems first sited had been improved new issues concerning the welfare of captive primates were discovered. Again warnings were issued and followed up on by the SPCA on a constant and regular basis. This unfortunately has been the pattern of this investigation and has frustrated our ability to take further action against the owners.

Our primary tool in fighting animal cruelty and neglect is the Animals Protection Act (no 71 of 1962). As such to seize animals or close down an establishment, we have to prove conclusively to a magistrate that intervention from the SPCA is necessary. In this case because the owners have made some improvements, we have been unable to obtain an order against this establishment. Notwithstanding these difficulties, we have been proactive in trying to bring about improvements to the living conditions and management of Monkey Town.

With specific reference to the Carte Blanche programme we can report that one of the female Hamadrayas Baboons has been sterilized and the second female (who is pregnant) has been separated from the rest the group. This has been done to prevent further infant fatalities. The owners were also been issued with a final warning for the lack of veterinary treatment for injured animals (i.e. the Lemur with injured eye). However, some of the physiological problems are as a result of stereotypical behaviour caused from being kept in captivity and cannot be easily remedied so long as these animals are kept in an establishment without extensive environmental enrichment.

The SPCA stands opposed to any degree of confinement or the use of any animal in sport, entertainment or exhibition likely to cause distress or suffering, or which may adversely affect the animal's welfare. We are also opposed to exhibitions or presentations of wild animals in circuses and travelling menageries. We are not responsible for permitting such establishments and if ever asked for our position, we would vehemently oppose the issuing of permits to any new zoo establishments. The

permit to operate is issued by the provincial conservation authority (Cape Nature Conservation), which does not include animal welfare standards as part of the licensing agreement.

The SPCA through our National Council will continue to vigorously lobby for the strengthening of national and regional legislation to protect animals in captivity.

Ends