

1. Establishing and Running an Animal Protection Society

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Introduction

This information note is about establishing and running a professional animal protection society. This is a serious commitment that will take enormous energy and commitment, and impact seriously upon all other aspects of your life. All too often, animal protection work simply takes over our lives. This can be rewarding, but it can also be physically and emotionally exhausting.

Anybody considering establishing an animal protection society should make sure that they read the HSUS and WSPA guidance, as a bare minimum. As the HSUS guidance itself advises: ‘the more careful the preparation, the more likely it is that the organisation will succeed in its goals’.

When establishing a new organisation, the first step in the process is to make enquiries to find out whether there are already animal protection societies in your country (see World Animal Net, where you can search for all societies in your country). If there are, then learn about these groups and the areas of work they cover. If possible, meet them to find out more. It may be more productive to join and strengthen their efforts, rather than duplicating their work?

The next part of essential research is to examine the range of animal protection problems that could be tackled (see also the WAN information notes on issues). If you intend to work nationally, then a good research tool is to prepare a report on the status of animal protection in your country, covering the main animal protection issues. This should examine, for each issue, the numbers of animals involved, the severity of their suffering (including duration), and the likelihood of being able to change the situation.

The other part of the equation is an honest assessment of your own resources and capabilities – both human and financial. What are your strengths and weaknesses, and what assets do you have at your disposal. These can then be considered against the animal protection issues that you have analysed, in order to make an assessment of how you can best help.

The information note on ‘Strategy’ explains more about the strategy process.

There are three main categories of animal protection activity (approaches): -

➤ Service Delivery

The largest and most prominent animal protection societies, including the SPCAs, are those that provide animal protection services. Such services include: stray control, euthanasia, sheltering, fostering, re-homing, veterinary care for animals of the disadvantaged, disaster relief/rescue, inspection and enforcement, and training, instruction and advice on animal protection issues (in particular to the authorities).

➤ **Advocacy**

Animal protection organisations carry out advocacy work (campaigning and lobbying) to improve the status and welfare of animals. They are the movement's 'engine for social change', and have already won some groundbreaking changes for animals.

➤ **Education**

Humane education is carried out to sensitise individuals to the plight of animals, generating empathy and thus improved treatment of animals. It is carried out at all levels of society, particularly in schools, higher education and in respect of supporters and consumers. The process of 'changing hearts and minds' is a long-term investment that changes both the practical treatment of animals and the social climate in favour of change.

For existing animal protection societies, enormous benefits can be won from seeking to constantly improve your work – there is more about this in these information notes. A more strategic approach is key to this, including ongoing research and strategic review.

Many animal protection societies are managed by people who were drawn to the movement through their commitment to the cause. Few have professional management qualifications, yet all should be seeking to run professional organisations that can successfully achieve their mission. For many this means fighting against governments, corporations and illegal animal abusers. Amateurs will simply not be able to fulfil their mission against these strengths and resources.

Choosing an Issue

When choosing an issue to work on, the major aspects that need to be considered are: -

- The resources of your organisation (staff and financial/assets). What are your particular strengths and skills?
- The range of potential animal protection issues (including the severity, duration and numbers of animals affected, existing and proposed legislation and conventions/regional or international agreements - and enforcement, and the likelihood of success. What are the major threats and opportunities?
- What other animal protection societies exist, what work do they already cover, and what are their approaches and methods? Where are the 'gaps in the market'?

The aim is to identify the issue that would make best use of your organisation's resources towards ensuring the maximum improvement for the plight of animals.

How to Start This Process

Logically, the first stage is to carry out an organisational analysis. This may help you to focus further analysis around a realistic assessment of your potential.

However, in amongst all this logical analysis, there also needs to be some creative vision and inspiration. So, it may be best to start with a more creative process, such as brainstorming, creative drawing or guided mediation (or some other 'envisioning' technique) about the best issue to tackle. You can then leave this aside and do the analysis, and return to it at a later stage. If you try creative techniques after the analysis has started, you are invariably influenced by the results of this. Similarly, some organisation's founders simply feel 'driven' to deal with a certain issue – and, in such

cases, there would be no point in investigating alternative issues. In this case, the organisation has to be built specifically to pursue the chosen issue.

Organisational Analysis

There are many factors that may influence the issue you chose. The major ones would probably be: -

- Number of staff
- Skills and abilities of staff (e.g. there is no point in analysing and/or choosing companion animals as an issue, if your organisation involves highly skilled marine biologists!)
- Location and size of office/organisational HQ
- Financial resources
- Assets and equipment available
- Whether you are animal rights or animal welfare
- Whether you want to campaign for social change, educate for change, or undertake service provision work
- Whether you are part of a regional or international network

'Status of Animal Protection' Analysis

It is suggested that a full 'status of animal protection' analysis is carried out for each of the issues the organisation is considering from the following: -

- Companion Animals
- Farm Animals
- Wildlife
- Working Animals
- Animals in Entertainment
- Animal Experimentation

These information notes include briefing about the major welfare issues.

The status report should include aspects such as: -

- Major welfare problems with each issue
- Statistics: numbers of animals affected
- Assessment of the severity and duration of the welfare problem
- Government contacts
- Legislation: existing and proposed national legislation, conventions and regional or international agreements - including enforcement
- Legislative system or processes, level of democracy, openness, consultation, success of consumer pressure etc.
- Existence of an Animal Welfare Committee (or Subject-Specific Animal Welfare Committees e.g. Farm Animal Welfare Committee etc.)?
- Assessment of likely success with the issue
- What are the major threats and opportunities?
- Educational opportunities
- Campaigns/media potential
- Industry initiatives/training etc.
- Financial opportunities (e.g. tenders for stray control etc.)?

It is most important to compare the numbers of animals involved and the level of their suffering – because all too often organisations think that the issue they witness/are aware of is the most serious. However, this is patently not true, as the numbers of farm animals

suffering in factory farms is many times that of, for example, the numbers of stray animals.

Some organisations also carry out an investigation into the most promising issues (visiting and recording actual situations).

The combination of analysis and investigation can form a powerful backdrop to any future work on the issue, as well as informing decisions about the issue and approach to be adopted.

Geographical Area

You also need to decide the geographical area you will cover i.e. whether you will work locally, nationally, regionally or internationally.

Impact of Country and Culture

You also need to make an assessment of the situation in your country and culture. For example, in some countries campaigning is not yet fruitful (e.g. because of low levels of democracy), in others it may not be permitted to run an animal shelter (as was the case in some former Communist countries in Eastern Europe). You need to examine your own situation, against the possible approaches you could take on your chosen issue.

Cost

The full cost of likely approaches should be evaluated and weighed against the likely end results (short and long-term). This may appear mercenary, but it is the only way to ensure that you are using your resources the save as many animals as humanly possible. For example, there is no point in deciding that you want to start an animal shelter, if you do not have the finances or the skills needed to do this.

Assessment

If in doubt, carry out a full impact analysis, weighing inputs against likely gains for animals over the longer-term. Do not lose the 'bigger picture' i.e. the importance of changing societal values or achieving long-lasting (and progressive) social change.

Root Cause

Whatever you decide to do, bear in mind that it is more effective to tackle a problem at its root. Dealing with the sad 'end-results', without tackling the root of the problem is soul destroying and counter-productive. This tendency to deal with 'end results', rather than tackling the roots is symptomatic of the animal protection movement (probably because the compassion felt for the 'end results' leads towards such approaches). However, an ultimate solution should be the aim, and this can only be reached by tackling – and stemming - the problem at source.

Further Resources

🔗 Web Sites

World Animal Net

<http://worldanimal.net/>

Includes the World Animal Net Directory of animal protection societies worldwide

Humane Society of the United States

<http://www.hsus.org/ace/18478>

http://files.hsus.org/web-files/HSI/E_Library_PDFs/eng_ht_form_org.pdf

Humane society organisation and operation documents, including 'How to Form an Animal Protection Society in your Community'.

PETA

<http://www.animalactivist.com/actguide6.asp>

Starting a group

The Nonprofit Resource Center

<http://not-for-profit.org/>

White Hat Communications

<http://www.whitehatcommunications.com/nphome.htm>

Online Non-Profit Information Centre. Includes Non-Profit Handbook and Including Quality and Performance on your Non-Profit Organisation

Books

Voluntary and Non-Profit Management

By: Julian Batsleer, Chris Cornforth, Rob Paton

Publisher: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company

ISBN: 0201565471

The Earthscan Reader on NGO Management

By: Michael Edwards (Editor), Alan Fowler (Editor), Michael Fowler

Publisher: Earthscan

ISBN: 1853838489

Striking a Balance: Effective Management and Organization for NGO's

By: Alan Fowler

Publisher: Earthscan

ISBN: 1853833258

How to Run a Voluntary Group: A Guide to Successful Organisation and Management

By: Chris Carling

Publisher: How To Books

ISBN: 1857031350

Managing a Voluntary Organisation (The Institute of Management Reports)

By: Sheila Evers

Publisher: The Institute of Management

ISBN: 0859462218

WSPA

The Establishment of an Animal Protection Society

A WSPA resource booklet