

XIII. The Service Delivery Role

This chapter examines the main categories of service delivery work, and considers potential pitfalls of going down the service delivery route. It draws out some key dilemmas. Service delivery work is demanding and can be a thankless task. Furthermore, the highest professional and animal welfare standards are required, and these need to be monitored and regularly reviewed. Without the proper quality control, animal welfare will fail, and the society's reputation is at stake as well as its future service delivery work. The opportunity costs of undertaking service delivery work are explained in terms of important campaigning and educational work to change the status quo, rather than support it.

'Service Delivery' Pitfalls

The chapter on 'Overview of Issues, Ethics and Approaches' gave some background information on the service delivery role of animal protection organisations. The category 'service delivery' was given in order to underline the fact that this role consists of carrying out services that should be the responsibility of government or official international organisations. Most animal protection societies would probably know this category of work as 'practical projects' or 'practical work'.

As was explained in the chapter on 'The International Animal Protection Lobby', only about 54 out of 192 countries have national animal protection laws. Also, there are, as yet, no international animal protection conventions or standards.

In the 54 countries (at the time of writing) that do have animal protection laws, there is a clear obligation on the governments that enacted these laws to enforce them. In the 138 countries that do not yet have animal protection laws, it could be argued that the primary task of animal protection societies should be campaigning to expose and press the government to introduce such laws.

However, it is appreciated that this is simply not feasible in some countries. Some animal protection organisations take on an unpaid service delivery role through desperation because the government/local authorities simply will not act. Then they are faced with daily animal suffering that makes them feel morally bound to intervene.

The important thing is for animal protection organisations not to detract from pressure for the government to take responsibility – not to 'enable' the government to avoid its responsibilities. The same is true of enabling animal use industries and individuals (e.g. the person abandoning their dog to a shelter) to avoid responsibility for their actions. This is one of the great pitfalls facing animal protection organisations taking on unofficial service delivery roles.

Another real problem that arises when animal protection organisations take on an unpaid service delivery role is that this becomes the 'status quo'. The government,

animal users and irresponsible individuals are ‘let off the hook’ in perpetuity. A new paradigm develops that this is ‘the job of animal protection’. So, many years later when animal protection legislation exists and awareness has increased, the animal protection organisation is still spending its hard-won resources on enforcement. Quite simply, pressure has been removed, and there is no incentive for other parties to change the status quo. However, most animal protection societies in this position have also accepted the new paradigm, and few press for appropriate funding and/or withdraw their services.

There can also be a problem of standards and welfare when animal protection organisations initially take on service delivery roles for which they are ill equipped (either in terms of skills/experience or financial resources). As was seen in the chapter in ‘Issues and Approaches’, service delivery organisations need to be professional and effective. They must be scrupulous about recruitment, training and staff standards (paying market rates and dismissing those who do not make the grade). To achieve the necessary standards, they have to be more tightly managed and bureaucratic than is usual for most animal protection societies. Many animal protection organisations taking on stray control services (particularly unpaid) find problems of quality of service. Most have great difficulty in balancing their animal protection mission with the harsher aspects of the job – facing many tough choices and decisions. Not a few actually cause more welfare problems – for example, by keeping animals in poor and cramped conditions, exposed to disease risk, and with little hope of re-homing.

In cases where service delivery work is taken on under a commercial contract for the government, the animal protection society has to tender for the service along with other (commercial) applicants. This can cause drawbacks in terms of compromise of standards/welfare in the search for cost competitiveness.

There is always the opportunity cost of taking on service delivery work to consider too – in terms of campaigning and educational work. Not only are scarce resources taken away, but also contractual service provision does not sit easily with the combative role of campaigning. Service delivery work tends to maintain the status quo, rather than pushing the boundaries towards reform.

Types of Service Delivery

There are many types of service delivery activities that are taken on by animal protection organisations. These include: -

- Stray control
- Animal warden services
- Sheltering, fostering, euthanasia, re-homing etc.
- Veterinary care for animals of the disadvantaged
- Neutering programmes
- Disaster relief/rescue (and training)
- Inspection and enforcement
- Education, training, instruction and advice on animal protection issues (in particular to the authorities or industry)

- Farm Sanctuary
- Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre
- Animal Welfare Help Lines

A large majority of animal protection groups work on companion animal issues. The overpopulation of dogs and cats is probably the most visual example of animal suffering, and many groups feel compelled to help. However, this often leads towards the most obvious intervention - collection and sheltering, whereas this complex and multifaceted problem has many potential interventions. As with many problems, tackling the root (or source) is more likely to lead to sustainable solutions. The ultimate aim should always be to avoid animal suffering and killing through effective preventative programmes.

Many animal protection societies throughout the world (notably SPCAs) carry out service delivery activities. The most common are stray control, sheltering and re-homing, veterinary care and neutering, and enforcement. Many carry out the whole range of companion animal activities. Many still do so with absolutely no recompense.

Inspection and Enforcement

Inspection and enforcement of animal protection law is a key area of service delivery. As with stray control, animal protection societies often take on enforcement duties in response to inadequate official enforcement. In the USA, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is charged with enforcing the Animal Welfare Act and the Humane Slaughter Act, yet they have only about 100 inspectors worldwide. In the UK, animal welfare enforcement is split between various government departments and local authorities. Coverage is far from effective and uniform across the country. The UK's RSPCA has 323 uniformed inspectors (three times as many as USDA, for a small country with other enforcement).

In Australia, the RSPCA is the only animal protection society charged with implementing and policing government legislation. At the time of writing, the Western Australian SPCA is running a campaign to make the State government provide sufficient funds for it to do the job. The society received no state funding for either its shelters or its inspection work (although it did receive \$250,000 Australian for educational work). The RSPCA were asking for an additional \$1 million over the next four years, and pointed out that the State government pocketed the funds from each successful prosecution.

In South Africa, there is modern animal welfare legislation. Yes the government has *no* animal welfare inspectors, so the poorly resourced SPCA has had to take up the baton. It is disgraceful that governments abdicate their responsibilities in this way. Should they not be strongly and persistently exposed, until forced to act?

This is a salutary lesson for those drafting or being consulted on animal protection legislation. When law is formulated, the enforcement mechanism should be planned to give maximum effect to the written law. A duty to enforce must be given to stipulated bodies (along with strictest penalties and sanctions against breach).

Enforcement should be uniform across the (federal) territory, both as regards levels of coverage and application. Guidance notes should be provided for enforcement officers to cover any areas of doubt.

In Australia, State Governments have made the RSPCA their main prosecutor. They provide funds to the charity, and have given it legal powers to inspect and prosecute animal cruelty. This could be viewed as States contracting out their duty to enforce to the best-equipped supplier, or it could be viewed as a simple abdication of their responsibility? It also has the effect of ‘co-opting’ the RSPCA, and neutralising them. After all, if you become part of the system, where is the impetus to press for social change? Sue Barker, who was a former member of the New South Wales RSPCA Council (1992-2003) was asked the following question by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s investigative programme ‘Four Corners’: ‘How connected is the RSPCA to government?’ Her response is telling: ‘I would almost see it as a government department and a lot of other people do as well’.

In an ideal world, animal protection organisations should be given the power to carry out *additional* inspections – both on individual enterprises and on the official enforcement system. That is as an additional (independent) investigative level – above and beyond official inspections. However, in order to merit such a role, it is vital that animal protection inspectors are professionally trained and experienced (and warranted/officially approved in some way). It is no good to either the enforcement system or the animal victims if well meaning but ill advised animal protection employees attempt to fill this important role. Also, it is inequitable for governments to restrict the animal protection inspection role to a single animal protection society. This is a restrictive practice. Any animal protection inspectors who meet the agreed criteria should be approved/warranted.

All enforcement officers should have specialist knowledge and be fully trained in animal welfare inspection. Full and complete guidance notes should be provided for all enforcement officers – animal protection and official. The official inspection work should also cover educational work and public awareness (as 90% of enforcement work is said to be education and advice). Animal protection societies education and training role should be additional, or a contracted service.

This would free animal protection resources to provide the necessary role of watchdog, investigator and agent for social change. In particular: -

- Campaigning and lobbying for social change (and improved enforcement)
- Supplementary inspection of official enforcement
- Investigations (covert and overt)
- Humane education and public awareness work

Of course, many societies may choose to take part in the official enforcement mechanism (e.g. through contract/tender), but they should be fully aware of the opportunity cost of this path.

Stray Control Contracts

In many countries, animal protection organisations undertake stray control duties with no recompense from the government or local authority. This is clearly not equitable.

In ‘developed’ countries, some local authorities carry out their own stray control work, but others contract out the service – very often to animal protection societies.

For example, in Canada, some municipalities run their own pound, staffed with their own employees, as in Vancouver and New Westminster. But most municipalities contract out animal control, as a cost-saving measure, just as they do many other services, such as garbage collection. Anyone may bid on the pound contract, and if their bid is lowest and they are deemed qualified, they get the contract.

In the UK, the situation is similar. Some local authorities carry out their own stray control work – with varying degrees of effectiveness and animal welfare awareness. Some work very well – with enlightened animal welfare officers and high-profile educational work. Others are part of the ‘Environmental Health Unit – like ‘pest control’. Many of these use the services of animal protection shelters, on a paid basis, for their work. Some work very closely and effectively with animal protection societies. In other cases, work is contracted out – often to animal protection societies.

The main drawbacks to animal protection organisation’s taking on stray control contracts are: -

- That they ‘enable’ dog-abandoners to pretend that they haven’t abandoned their dog – that they’ve handed it over to a kind-hearted agency that loves dogs, and will find a ‘good’ home for it, so they’ve done nothing immoral.
- The organisation becomes a paid dog killer, rather than pressing for legislation to make pounds humane and carrying out inspections to ensure that they are just this.
- The opportunity costs of carrying out this massive role.

The other side of the coin is that when animal protection organisations carry out this work themselves, they can at least be sure that it will be done humanely and not carelessly by a commercial company.

Obligations sometimes increase until the stray control contract is not worth the financial recompense (e.g. enormous catchment areas, massive stray problems etc.). However, the stray contract is another paradigm that appears difficult to shift. Animal protection societies appear to relish the official link and acceptance, and cannot believe the job could be done better by an organisation motivated by profit. These may or may not be valuable considerations – but what is clear is that an informed review of the situation should be carried out regularly.

Animal Warden/Welfare Officer

The animal warden’s role is central to stray control work. The terminology and job breadth tells much about a society’s attitude towards stray control work. For example, in the UK, the job can be called ‘animal warden’ or ‘animal welfare officer’ – the latter being in more welfare-friendly local authorities. In the latter case, the role is usually also preventative and educational. In the USA, the term commonly used is ‘animal control officer’, which clearly has negative repressive connotations.

The following UK Web Site includes interesting information about the animal warden’s role: -

<http://www.animalwardens.com/>

Sheltering

Many animal protection organisations aspire to own their own shelter. However, the decision should not be taken lightly. A shelter is an enormous commitment, in terms of finance, work, emotional drain, and opportunity cost. For many smaller organisations, opening an animal shelter is at the expense of all their other animal protection work. They are swept along in the mammoth task, at the expense of every other plan and aspirations. Many question the value of a shelter, particularly in countries where re-homing is difficult or non-existent. In this case, the impact of the shelter is limited – either becoming a ‘catch and kill’ centre or a sanctuary where the facilities soon fill and the static population remains incarcerated until death.

Re-homing Centre or Sanctuary?

This brings us to the primary dilemma of animal protection societies wanting to run a shelter: whether to have a re-homing centre or a sanctuary. In effect, the key decision is whether to euthanise or not. Often the decision influenced by deeply ingrained moral or cultural conditioning. It should always be thoroughly considered, at both a rational and emotional level. Only by carefully considering the consequences of each option will a genuine ethical decision be possible. The following are just some of the considerations involved: -

No Euthanasia

- Caring for the welfare of animals kept for life?
- Problems caused by ‘full shop’ (i.e. turning animals away, what to do with animals simply left at the shelter etc.)
- How much ‘mission accomplishment’?
- Daily grind can give strain without real welfare gains (if no or low re-homing)
- Ongoing costs necessary
- ‘Enabling’ those who abandon companion animals

Euthanasia

- Difficult choices
- Emotional toll on staff
- Gruelling task of killing
- ‘Enabling’ local authorities to shirk responsibilities (and give no impetus to preventative approaches)
- Society reputation
- Possible loss of funding/support
- Conscience

Disaster Relief

Another area of service delivery work is disaster relief work. Many of the larger animal protection organisations undertake disaster relief work. The approach varies between an ad hoc foray into the disaster zone, attempting to rescue individual animal victims as possible, through to a planned/official assessment visit of limited duration. The latter can be followed by the organisation arranging its own aid programme to pressure being placed on the UN and governments to take appropriate action.

The first question about animal disaster relief is whether animal protection societies should be doing this themselves, or whether they should be pressing for official support and inclusion in existing disaster relief networks. The second question is, given that they are doing this, how to maximise effectiveness.

In response to the first question, it is clear that there is an established network for human victims for disasters, but nothing for animal victims. For example, there is a UN Web Site on disaster relief, which includes training opportunities, early warning systems etc., see: -

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>

There are also many human rights NGOs involved, and it would appear that the UN's main role is in coordination. So perhaps the first step should be to seek recognition and parity for animal victims?

In response to the second question, there can be little doubt that a strategic approach of a risk assessment and needs analysis, following by lobbying and/or aid provision will be more effective. Indeed, in past instances, governments have been known to provide aid for animal victims. So, a planned assessment can save animal protection organisation resources and maximise aid. This leads to another question: 'If this is the case, why do so many animal protection societies favour the 'swoop and save' approach? This may be because animal protection organisations are prone to hasty 'direct relief' approaches? Or could it be because it is very effective at achieving media coverage and donations?

Although many animal protection organisations carry out disaster relief work, there is not yet effective coordination amongst animal protection societies, let alone between societies and the UN and/or governments. A notable exception is the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), which concluded a memorandum with United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in 2003, which stated that the APHIS will assist HSUS Disaster Animal Response Teams by arranging access to disaster areas whenever possible and coordinating with individuals working in state offices of the Department of Agriculture. The agreement also states that the APHIS and HSUS will work together to educate individuals about animal-related aspects of disaster preparedness by jointly distributing information, sponsoring conferences and conducting training exercises. This indicates strategic lobbying and alliances, something apparently missing from many other organisations' approaches. See: -

<http://www.hsus.org/ace/18730>

HSUS Disaster Relief Centre, which includes a disaster planning manual

Veterinary Care

Many animal protection organisations, including SPCAs, undertake veterinary work for animals of people who cannot afford commercial veterinary care. The veterinary professional sometimes fights against this at the beginning, feeling that it potentially takes away clients. In response to this, some animal protection societies establish a bursary scheme that requires owners to prove that they are in financial need. Many animal protection societies establish their own veterinary clinics or hospitals to run

such schemes. This is an enormous financial undertaking, involving massive overheads and staff resources. Others enable a known veterinary clinic to run a bursary scheme for the pets of the poor on their behalf. Once a charity system is established, private veterinarians often come to appreciate the fact that this prevents them having 'bad debts' from unpaid bills of poor clients. Where such schemes do not exist, some veterinary practices take their commitment to animal welfare seriously, and treat animals even if their owners cannot afford the fees.

Neutering

Responsible animal protection societies neuter all companion animals leaving their shelters, in order to ensure that their animals do not become part of the stray problem.

Some undertake neuter, vaccinate and release schemes, instead of sheltering. This can be an effective stray control measure in given circumstances, including: -

- The local authority supports and recognises the scheme (and will not simply 'catch and kill' neutered animals)
- The local community accepts and cares for the stray dog/cat colony (community dogs/cats).
- The dogs/cats are all clearly identified.
- The colony is static and no 'whole' animals join the colony (or that it is monitored on an ongoing basis and any incomers neutered immediately).
- There are no aggressive dogs involved, and the group does not tend to 'pack' in a threatening manner.

However, it is a constant job of work, and the input required should be appreciated. Also, a very large pack/colony may be impossible to control successfully (as the society may not be able to neuter and release quickly enough to control numbers).

Some societies also undertake neutering promotion and cut price neutering amongst the general population, in order to spread neutering and stem the stray problem at source. In this case, the same considerations occur as with the provision of veterinary care (see above). Some overcome the problems by using a voucher system for clients that are unable to afford market prices. These vouchers can be used to offset the cost of neutering at given veterinary clinics/hospitals.

Farm Sanctuary

There are not many sanctuaries for farm animals across the world. Most farm animals are part of the food chain, and - sadly – end up at the slaughterhouse. Buying farm animals for sanctuaries would simply fuel the food production chain – paying animal protection society funds into the meat business. However, some farm animals are kept by animal protection societies when they are confiscated because they are the subject of a cruelty case or prosecution. There are even fewer sanctuaries that are solely for farm animals, as most farm animals end up with general societies or SPCAs.

The key benefits of having a farm sanctuary are: -

- Supporters love the practical nature of farm sanctuaries and they are good fundraisers.

- They can be great education centres.
- They give the organisation the opportunities to demonstrate welfare-friendly farming systems – a good plus for any lobbying work.

The drawbacks are the same as for a shelter – the finance needed, the staff resources and time commitment, and the opportunity costs.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre

Considerations for a wildlife rehabilitation centre are also similar to those for a shelter. In the case of wildlife, the ultimate aim should be to release animals back into the wild (after rehabilitation). There are some wildlife sanctuaries, but it is difficult and expensive to provide the type of environment that would cater for the welfare of various species of wildlife in a captive setting. Thus, the euthanasia debate also occurs here.

There is clearly a service delivery debate here in respect of previously captive wildlife – for example, animals that were previously in zoos/circuses or being used for research. In such cases, humane retirement/disposal should be a business cost for the zoo/circus or laboratory. So is the animal protection society not ‘enabling’ by taking responsibility without financial recompense?

One useful precedent was the case of the Biomedical Primate Research Centre (BPRC) in the Netherlands. After a concerted campaign by a coalition of animal protection groups from across Europe, the Dutch government voted unanimously to hand over the EU’s remaining laboratory chimps to a primate protection organisation, ‘Stichting Aap’. Furthermore, the Dutch government agreed to pay for the construction of two new sanctuaries for the chimps (one for the healthy ones and one for HIV infected chimps) and lifetime care.

Animal Protection Committees

Sitting on official animal protection committees and ethics panels is another form of service delivery, as the provision of free advice or expertise is akin to a service. There is also the question of whether this is simply a case of ‘cooption’?

Each case should be judged on its individual merits. The balance of utility should be judged and constantly reassesses. Central is the ability to influence outcomes positively. If an animal protection member sits on a committee that fails to take account of his/her views, then this is a clear case of cooption (tacit endorsement of decisions). However, if valuable information is made available, there is openness and transparency and each member is entitled to record their viewpoint publicly (e.g. in a minority report), then there may be a balance of utility in favour of staying on the committee. But this will, as always, depend on opportunity cost (what could he/she be doing if not spending time on the committee)?

Service Delivery Standards

In each case, service delivery work has an opportunity cost that needs to be considered.

Another consideration is the standard of service delivery – what is acceptable to the organisation and its supporters? If standards drop, there will always be a willing witness to ‘blow the whistle’. Animal protection organisations undertaking service delivery work need to be totally professional, to have agreed standards of service and measurement. These need to be monitored and regularly reviewed.

The ideal tyranny is that which is ignorantly self-administered by its victims. The most perfect slaves are, therefore, those which blissfully and unawaredly enslave themselves.

Dresden James