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## Help Prevent Animal Cruelty

*Shaftsbury, VT (April 2009)* - April is Animal Cruelty Awareness Month – a time to think about what we can do to help the most vulnerable among us – the animals who have no way to help themselves.

Animals are really not that much different than humans. Oh, they may have four legs and be covered in fur, but animals feel pain and fear just as we do. Sadly, they have no way of speaking for themselves. So we must speak for them.

Here are just a few of the ways you can help:

- 1) First and foremost, set a good example for others to follow. As Mahatma Gandhi said “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”
- 2) Teach your children the importance of kindness and respect for all living creatures; and if you have pets, teach your children how to care for them.
- 3) Become more aware of the animals in your community. Are there any animals in your neighborhood showing signs of abuse or severe neglect? What about that dog left chained in the backyard often without adequate food, water or shelter?
- 4) If you know of, witness or suspect animal cruelty or neglect, report it to the appropriate authorities. In Bennington County, that means contacting Second Chance Animal Center (SCAC) in Shaftsbury at (802) 375-2898. SCAC serves as the central clearinghouse for animal cruelty for the county and last year conducted and/or participated in 66 investigations – more than one a week. Most recently SCAC rescued a litter of pure-bred Bassett Hound puppies and their “mom” and “dad” from truly deplorable conditions.
- 5) Support the passage of stronger anti-cruelty laws at the federal, state and local levels. Animal cruelty is often a precursor of domestic abuse and other forms of violence. Contact your legislators and let them know that you want stronger laws and tougher penalties for animal cruelty.

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