



# Unfinished business



A very thin horse (very low body condition score) with no underlying disease is shown after seizure by the Manitoba Animal Protection. It takes many months of not having enough to eat for a horse that is not ill to become this thin. PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN WITH PERMISSION OF CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICE, MANITOBA

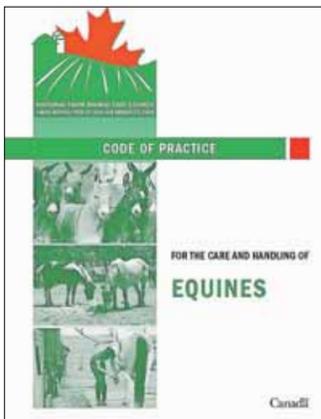
## Proposed animal welfare act stalled after first reading

On P.E.I., responsibility for the welfare of both pets and farm animals falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry (PEIDAF). Animal welfare is currently governed by two pieces of legislation—the Companion Animal Protection Act and the Animal Health and Protection Act. The department is responsible for investigating welfare complaints related to



**Animal Talk**

Dr. Alice Crook



This is the cover of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines, 2013, National Farm Animal Care Council. SUBMITTED PHOTO

farm animals and contracts the services of the P.E.I. Humane Society (PEIHS) to investigate complaints related to pets.

Both pieces of current P.E.I. animal welfare legislation use a distress-based trigger. This means an animal has to be sick, injured or in need of care before intervention can occur. Once an animal is deemed to be in distress, an animal welfare inspector will refer to a code of practice to determine what corrective measures are required to correct the distress. The Canadian codes of practice are nationally recognized standards for the care and handling of animals which have been developed for different species. A veterinarian may also be called in to help determine distress.

The main drawback to legislation that relies on a distress-based trigger is that it delays the ability of animal welfare inspectors to act. This results in a delay before an animal can receive the care and treatment it needs. After the P.E.I. Puppies Across Canada case in 2010, the department determined to improve animal protection through education and through a comprehensive review of P.E.I. animal welfare legislation in consultation with the PEIHS, Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association and the livestock industry. The goals were to reduce delays, improve the protection offered to animals in the province and modernize the legislation. The DAF also reviewed animal welfare legislation in other provinces.

The conclusion was that a move from a distress-based trigger to a standard of care model is the most effective approach, with an increase in penalties including jail time for those found guilty of an offence.

A standard of care model uses the codes of practice to set the minimum care an animal needs for it to live a healthy and comfortable life. Most important, the standard of care model allows animal welfare inspectors to intervene before an animal is sick or in distress, if it is determined that the owner of the animal is not providing the care outlined in



This dog had multiple problems related to ongoing neglect (for example, badly matted coat with skin wounds underneath, very overgrown nails). He received care at the P.E.I. Humane Society after being seized by P.E.I. Animal Protection (DAF) and was ultimately adopted. The original owner (Puppies Across Canada) was convicted of neglect. PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN FROM THE P.E.I. HUMANE SOCIETY

the code of practice.

P.E.I.'s proposed new Animal Welfare Act (Bill 26) adopts the standard of care model and increases the penalties for those found guilty of an offence. The new act combines the Companion Animal Welfare Act and the Animal Health and Protect Act. The minister of agriculture introduced the new legislation to the legislative assembly in the fall sitting, where it received first reading. However, because of the very short fall sitting of the Legislature, the second and third readings required to enact the legislation did not occur.

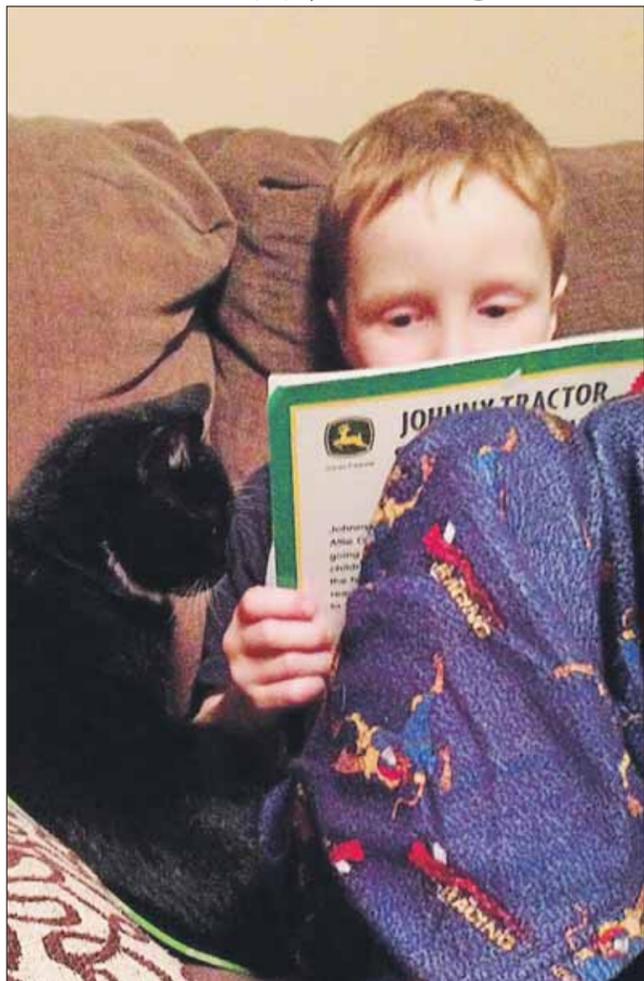
If there is a spring sitting of the P.E.I. legislature, second and third reading can take place and the legislation can be enacted before the summer. If not, the legislation dies on the floor, and the department will be required to start the entire approval process again.

Meanwhile, the current distress-based legislation remains in place, delaying the ability of animal welfare inspectors to intervene in a timely manner. It is imperative the new standard-of-care based Animal Welfare Act be enacted quickly so that animals may receive the protection they deserve and require (according to agreed upon standards) before they are in physical distress.

Next month in Animal Talk: Specialty diets for dogs and cats.

Dr. Alice Crook is co-ordinator of the Sir James Dunn

## A happy ending



Maverick was adopted from the P.E.I. Humane Society in October by Amy Mosher, who says, "Chase is six. He and Maverick are inseparable. Chase likes to play follow the leader with Maverick all over the house and read him stories." PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN BY AMY MOSHER

## AT A GLANCE

▶ Canadian codes of practice: farm animals - [nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice](http://nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice); dogs and cats - [canadianveterinarians.net/documents/Code-of-Practice-for-Canadian-Kennel-Operations](http://canadianveterinarians.net/documents/Code-of-Practice-for-Canadian-Kennel-Operations) or [canadianveterinarians.net/documents/a-code-of-practice-for-canadian-cattery-operations](http://canadianveterinarians.net/documents/a-code-of-practice-for-canadian-cattery-operations).

▶ For concerns about an animal: dogs, cats or other small companion animals, contact the P.E.I. Humane Society at 902-892-1190; farm animals, including horses, the P.E.I. Department of Agriculture and Forestry at 902-314-0774.

▶ Every complaint is kept confidential, treated seriously and investigated by an Animal Protection Officer. In most circumstances, owners simply require education about better animal care. In extreme instances, the animal will be seized by the Society and cruelty or neglect charges can be laid.

Animal Welfare Centre, one of the member groups of the P.E.I. Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI). Animal Talk is a monthly column in The Guardian produced by CAWI, the goal of which is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals on P.E.I. CAWI consists of the P.E.I. Humane Society, SpayAid, Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry, P.E.I. 4-H, and Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Links to each of these groups are at [gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI](http://gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI). Readers are invited to send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to [cawipei@gmail.com](mailto:cawipei@gmail.com).