

Paws & Ponder

Autumn 2008



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Log on and Give

Visit
our website
StCroixAWC.org
And donate to
help the animals
today!

At the Heart of the Matter—Animal Control

Dear Reader,

The SCAWC is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the humane treatment of animals in the community and to eliminating pet overpopulation on St. Croix.

The heart of our day to day operations at the shelter is to provide the island of St. Croix with municipal **Animal Control** services.

VI Government Contract

The St. Croix AWC is currently seeking to have our **Animal Control** contract critically reviewed by the VI Government so that the terms of our expense reimbursement for this important government function can be improved.

Over the past three years we have received, on average, funding from the VI Government of approximately \$85,000. This is in contrast to our average cost per year of \$425,000 to provide **Animal Control** services to the St. Croix community. This cost excludes the additional expenses of our special programs and fundraising endeavors. (*For more information about Animal Control services see page 3*)

The upshot is that we need to borrow and fundraise over \$340,000 every year just to pay for the costs of services that the VI Government is responsible for, but that we provide, and are not adequately reimbursed for!

With appropriate compensation for services rendered, not only would we be able to fix our budget deficit, but the AWC would be able to vastly improve the quality of our Animal Control services. Then the bulk of our fundraising dollars could be directed toward proactively solving the problem of pet overpopulation on island.

Tourism & Public Health

Increased tourism in the Caribbean and improved animal welfare go hand in hand. Tourists and locals alike do not like to see packs of stray, sick, injured starving animals roaming in 'paradise.' Tourists and locals alike do not enjoy frequenting public beaches littered with animal waste and/or potentially dangerous stray animals. The public health aspect of the **Animal Control** situation that we handle is immense.

To date our efforts to meet with current administration yielded support and encouragement from Senator Nelson, Senator Weber and Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr. Peterson. We are hopeful that the entire community will rally around the AWC and recognize the huge responsibility (and associated costs) that we assume for St. Croix on an annual basis. This past year alone, we handled close to 4,000 homeless animals.

Only with TEAM effort will we see our mission through to fruition. With your continued support, I know we can do it! Let's put an end to pet overpopulation and animal cruelty on St. Croix **NOW**.

—Dr. Stacia Boswell, V.M.D, Executive Director and Staff Veterinarian

SILENT WITNESS



ABUSE, VIOLENCE, CRIME ANTI-CRUELTY CONFERENCE 2008

The St. Croix Animal Welfare Center (AWC) will host Silent Witness, a territory-wide conference on anti-cruelty on Friday, Oct. 24th.

So often, the first victims of domestic violence are pets, who have no voice to protest. These Silent Witnesses can alert the community to hidden violence, if we only know how to read the signs and react. AWC invites attendees to examine the hard evidence that links violence against animals to domestic and other violent crimes:

- Investigate the dangers of animal cruelty in our community
- Get the facts on the warning signs of abuse
- Stop the violence that damages health, investments, and tourism revenue in our community.

Two speakers from the American Humane Association will discuss the link between animal-human abuse and the criminal prosecution of animal abuse crimes. A discussion panel of local leaders will wrap up the conference.

Territory policy makers, law enforcement and NGOs with an anti violence message are encourage to attend. The conference will be held at the Divi Carina Bay Resort. Entrance fee is \$30 and includes breakfast, lunch and afternoon coffee. Call 778-1680 or visit us online to learn more: www.StCroixAWC.org

\$5,000 REWARD—Report Dog Fighting

St. Croix AWC is eligible to enact the **Rewards** program created by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). HSUS offers a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons involved in dog fighting.

AWC works diligently to get animal cruelty cases, such as dog fighting, prosecuted. In order to take advantage of the Rewards program, HSUS suggests the following steps:

- Call AWC and the VIPD, report the crime and give as many details as possible about the suspected dog fighting
- You ***do not*** have to give your name to report suspected illegal dog fighting.
- Tell VIPD about the **Rewards** program
- Contact VIPD to write a letter to HSUS
- The letter should state that your tip led to the arrest and prosecution of the convicted dog fighter.

For more information visit www.hsus.org

(photo and program text courtesy of HSUS)



**Animal Fighting Hurts
Animals, Children,
Communities and You
Be Part of the Solution**

What does AWC's Animal Control team do?

Animal Control functions include:

- Animal pick up and surrender
- Processing
- Housing, feeding, veterinary care for holding period
- Humane euthanasia
- Administrative operations and staff salaries
- Animal warden vehicles and equipment
- Investigation and enforcement of anti-cruelty laws in the Territory

Animal Control is a local government responsibility.

Animal Control work affects the Territory in terms of tourism, public health, crime and the economy.



(l-r: Moises Carmona and Odey Constant)

First Responders—AWC Animal Control Team

Moises Carmona and Odey Constant

First and foremost Moises Carmona and Odey Constant are animal lovers though the duty they perform as the animal control team—the first responders to animal cruelty calls—is not a job many “animal lovers” would choose to do. Six days a week from 8:30 to 5:30, Carmona and Constant drive the roads of St. Croix responding to calls of distress.

“We are the ones seeing all these cruelty cases, we are the ones getting in touch with VIPD, we are the ones seeing the Attorney General, we are the only ones that are pushing to see justice for animals that have been neglected and abused,” said Carmona.

Answering the Call

The animal control team answers the calls not only of concerned citizens, but also requests from VIPD to remove dogs being used as guards for criminal situations such as drug operations. Animal control responds to paramedics, offering help when dogs prevent ambulance teams from reaching patients. Carmona and Constant want St. Croix to know about the beneficial services that they provide to the community: fewer animals roaming the streets means fewer animal borne disease and safer streets. In addition to providing a public health service, animal control benefits tourism and island investment.

“It’s better for the VI government that tourists don’t see so many animals walking stray in the

street and think that we (Virgin Islanders) are not animal lovers,” explains Carmona.

“And they do call us,” said Constant. “Tourists call us all the time.”

Cruelty and Neglect

Dedication to St. Croix community safety pits Carmona and Constant against the dangerous underworld of organized crime--dog fighting which is a felony crime in the Virgin Islands.

“It’s not a sport, it’s a terrible lack of compassion,” insists Carmona. “A dog gains no glory from killing another dog—he is only fighting to stay alive. If you really care and love an animal you would never put it to fight.”

But Constant and Carmona want people to know that animal cruelty is more than dog fighting:

- Failing to be responsible pet owners is cruelty
- Not providing safety inside when hurricanes threaten is cruelty.
- Abandoning dogs and cats is cruelty.

Constant implores people leaving island to bring their animals to AWC and not subject them to a slow death of starvation.

“Please don’t loose your dog. Bring it to the shelter,” pleads Constant. “Don’t abandon your dog.”

“People have to understand that the problems animal control responds to are not caused by the animal shelter, but by pet owners not behaving responsibly,” said Carmona.

Their Hearts are in Our Hands

St. Croix AWC animal control responds to thousands of calls and handles thousands of animals each year. The requirements for the job? Both men agree—respect, compassion and heart.

St. Croix
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Our mission is to promote the humane treatment of animals in the St. Croix community through education, encouragement, and enforcement.

St. Croix AWC works to improve the safety and quality of life on St. Croix by increasing compassion and respect.



Paws and Ponder is sponsored by A Better Copy, Inc. 52 Company St. Christiansted, VI

AWC Wish List
 Pedigree Dog Food
 Wiskas Dry Cat Food
 Cat Litter
 Call us at 778-1650 or visit www.StCroixAWC.org to find out what other items our homeless animals need.

Summer Interns and New Staff



Interns provide TLC to AWC beauty I-r
 Jonique McKenzie,
 Sasha Morales,
 Jamaal Valmont



AWC puppies get a hand from Dan McDaid (l) and Jonique McKenzie (r)

St. Croix AWC benefited from the helping hands of three summer interns: Jonique McKenzie of Senator Jimmy Weber's office, Sasha Morales and Jamaal Valmont of the Department of Labor. These interns learned about AWC programs and services and aided staff in daily animal care operations, promoting humane education and responsible pet care. Dan McDaid joined the AWC team as the new Humane Education Assistant. Dan served as an AWC volunteer prior to joining the staff and will assist Therese Donarski in educating students and adults alike in the St. Croix community. Readers can learn more about AWC anytime by visiting www.St.CroixAWC.org

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
 AWC needs volunteers!
 Contact info@stcroixawc.org or call 778-1650