

Nachrichten von November 2003 & Oktober 2003

ZIMBABWE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
PVO 38/69

SPCA Member Centres:

Beitbridge - Bulawayo - Chegutu - Chinhoyi - Chiredzi - Gweru - Harare - Hwange - Kadoma - Kwekwe - Marondera - Mashava - Masvingo - Mutare - Zvishavane

30 NOVEMBER 2003

It has been about two months since our last report but there has been very little time for correspondence. Most of you will already be aware that there has been a further deterioration in the situation in Zimbabwe. Following the closure of our only independent daily newspaper, there has been an escalation in violence and oppressive activities.

This obviously makes the work of the Rescue Team more difficult than it already is as they often fail to secure the appropriate armed support usually required to effect a rescue.

The Team have been attempting to locate a 9 month old Labrador in Odzi which was abducted, from a farm in the area. All other dogs were rescued

The Team have been trying to negotiate for the release of 11 diary cows and a bull on a farm on Bromley which are being held hostage. The settlers are demanding the return of the farm, s generator.

There have been numerous tragic cases involving dairy herds which are literally starving to death as disputes over wages and farm equipment continue.

In Beatrice, the ZNSPCA will be prosecuting a new farmer as at least 200 cattle have died and continue to die on a daily basis. The Team have provided hay and ensured the provision of water. The remaining animals have been auctioned via video as most would not survive being sent to the sale pens. The herd has been dipped by the ZNSPCA and the Team will monitor the removal of the animals as farm workers have not been paid for 3 months and may dispute the removal of the herd.

On a neighbouring farm, the absentee new farmer is also being prosecuted for similar cruelty. It is a smaller diary herd but 59 cows have already collapsed and died. Despite supplementary feeding not being provided for at least 3 weeks, the cows are still being milked. On the farm, the Team also found 7 pigs without any food or water. They were let out of their pen in order to forage.

There was a little rain this week which should provide some new grazing.

In the Concession area a very militant and influential new farmer has been extremely difficult to contend with, claiming that the ZNSPCA are working with the commercial farmers. Meryl reports that they have received no co-operation from Concession police who also appear to have been intimidated. The Provincial Veterinary Officer has been assisting by addressing the Ministry of Agriculture in this case. The herd of about 180 cows is being milked daily also without any supplementary feeding. The animals are infested with ticks as they have not been dipped for some time. Due to unrelenting lobbying by Meryl, the herd Bull was finally destroyed. The animal was in a severely injured condition and must have suffered immense pain until he was put down.

On a farm in the Marondera area (where Meryl and Addmore were barricaded in last year) 2 polo horses were reported to have been left behind and were in poor condition. The Team were refused entry when they tried to gain access. The farm belongs to an MP. An escort has been promised by the Marondera Police.

The Team returned to Golden Acres Stud Farm (reported on previously). Four Stallions had been left behind on neighbouring farms and had become very wild. They managed to break through the fence to Golden Acres and mate with two pregnant mares causing them to abort.

It is suspected that this may have happened previously and blood tests will have to be carried out on certain foals. Although a difficult task for the Team, all four Stallions were humanely destroyed.

Cattle on a farm in the Wedza area were found to have various axe injuries and one had a snare imbedded around its neck. The house and tractor had been completely vandalized and trashed. There should have been a herd of some 134 beef cattle on the farm but only 19 were recovered by the Team. The prized bull had been badly axed. One cow had been axed in the stomach and another

in the back. The cattle were originally being herded but the workers were ambushed and beaten. Since the Team's visit, a further 18 head have been recovered and one arrest made.

The Lion and Cheetah Park was re-invaded (for the third time). The white Manager was thrown off and threatened that he would be shot if he returned. He was concerned about certain animals requiring treatment and medication, but Meryl was able to gain access and arrange for their treatment. Contingency plans have been made to remove the animals to nearby Pamuzinda.

The Team continues to expend a great deal of time and fuel on locating stray horses which have been left behind.

I asked Meryl for her overall view of the situation on the ground and she is deeply concerned at the level of suffering taking place, particularly dairy cows which are proving to be most vulnerable. They require constant experienced attention which they are not receiving and are subsequently dying in huge numbers. She is also alarmed at the level of suffering of pigs left on the farms often found without food or water in unhygienic conditions.

Meryl is further concerned by a 'rabbit project' initiated by the Zimbabwe Trust. The staff are inexperienced and unqualified and there is a huge hygiene problem with insufficient bedding and water being provided for the poultry, rabbits and pigs being kept..

To end on a positive note, Meryl did report that the large female that was removed from the University has integrated well with the colony and has had a baby. Tiggie, the young female has sadly not yet been 'adopted'.

I apologise that this update is already somewhat out of date but have had to compile it whenever I have a few moments to myself. I will endeavour to get a further report out before year end.

Kind regards, Bernice

ZNSPCA INSPECTORATE OVERVIEW OF 2003

Yet another extremely busy year for the team of ZNSPCA Inspectors in which we carried out 68 Farm Rescues. We are on the road daily in the two ZNSPCA trucks covering a large area, especially as there is now no longer an SPCA in Marondera.

New Year's Day, 2003, found Inspector Jimmy Zuze and I at Forrester Estate in Mvurwi where we were investigating the deliberate death by starvation and drowning of 300 weaners by settlers and workers. The situation was not helped by the fact that Police at Mvurwi Police Station from whom we were seeking assistance with the provision of an escort, were drunk and uncooperative.

2003 ended with Inspector Simon Chikadaya and myself at Waltondale Farm in Marondera. Previous attempts to gain access to the farm to check on two horses that had been left behind by the previous owner, had been met with strong resistance by the Border Gezi youths at the gate – in spite of the fact that the Police accompanied us. On the third attempt we had with us the Officer-in Charge, Marondera Rural ZRP who told the youths in no uncertain terms that they WILL let ZNSPCA Inspectors in, even if we come in the middle of the night! The gate was unlocked and we walked in – condition of horses was reasonable.

During farm rescues, the ZNSPCA Team has been barricaded 'in' and barricaded 'out', we have been threatened, pushed around and accused of being members of the M.D.C. and "spies", and countless times I have been told to "go back to Britain!"

I would like to commend the Inspectors for never losing their cool in these difficult situations. Recently, two of them were shoved and pulled around by ZANU PF youths (not on a farm). ZNSPCA has subsequently laid charges of assault against those responsible.

Farm rescues have taken us to places as far away as Karoi, Centenary, Marondera and Chimanimani, rescuing everything from duikers to goldfish, horses to goats and bulls to bantams. Our only major setback has been to gain access to Collingwood Farm in Concession.

In spite of 6 attempts to gain entry, even with Support Unit, the present incumbent – Richard Ngwenya, has friends in high places and appears to be 'untouchable'. From information received, we know that over 100 Dairy Cows belonging to the owner, Mr & Mrs Gaisford, have died from disease and incorrect feeding. ZNSPCA and the Gaisfords have now applied to the High Court in an urgent application for us to get on to the farm.

In between the Farm Rescues we have continued to prevent cruelty and abuse to animals in Zimbabwe. Some of the matters attended to:

1. After many meetings with the Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Zimbabwe, ZNSPCA was able to secure the removal of 5 Baboons from the Animal House, to the Lion and Cheetah Park. Not as good as being out in the wild, but a vast improvement on life in a small weld-mesh cage. We are now pushing to secure the release of the Vervet monkeys but they are still "having experiments carried out on them".

2. Still at the University, we found that the way livestock was being kept at the Large Animals House gave great cause for concern. However, ZNSPCA has held numerous meetings with the relevant department and, with their cooperation, have been able to improve the welfare of these animals.

3. Likewise, with the mice, rats and hamsters housed at the Government Blair Research and Analytical Laboratories - conditions were found to be horrific to begin with, but have since greatly improved.

4. ZNSPCA has been able to improve the welfare of the many donkeys in Gokwe, bringing cotton bales to the many depots in that area. I approached Cotco and requested that they install water troughs at all their receiving depots and am pleased to report that they have agreed and many are already in place.

5. We have provided support for the Lion and Cheetah Park on the three occasions that they have been invaded.

6. Organised dog fighting has reared its ugly head in Harare again, and for several months now, ZNSPCA has been battling for a breakthrough. Those involved are unemployed youths from Arcadia who are also involved with drugs - all are known to us. Recently, an 18 year old tried to drag me out of my truck as I had just confiscated his Staffordshire bull terrier puppy which was found being kept in an upturned supermarket trolley. Inspector Chinhembe pulled the youth away from me, and we sped off down the road with Chinhembe clinging to the roof of the truck. At last a member of the community has come forward to give us an eye-witness account of a fight which took place on New Year's Day. We will be prosecuting.

7. ZNSPCA is currently dealing with cruelty cases involving two animal "hoarders". Always extremely difficult cases to deal with, hoarders have to be handled with tact and understanding. Prosecution is not always effective; the many animals they keep in their homes have to be reduced gradually. Hoarders begin with the good intention of saving a few animals' lives, but end up failing to provide adequate care for the growing numbers. Experts say that hoarders are harder to reform than alcoholics and many have borderline personalities.

8. The Pet Shop in South Avenue, Harare has given great cause for concern for many years. In order to close the pet shop down once and for all, ZNSPCA approached the Municipal Health Department, their Licencing Department and National Parks. Due to the combined efforts of all involved, the owner has been informed that he may no longer sell birds, poultry, animals, etc. but operate as a hardware shop only.

A combined 'blitz' on his home is planned, as we know that conditions for the 'stock' that he keeps there are worse than in the shop. The owner has already informed ZNSPCA that he is taking out a Court Order to prevent us from visiting either of his properties.

WILDLIFE – We continue to monitor the welfare of the male Leopard currently being kept in a small enclosure by National Parks at Nyamaneche (near Centenary). He is destined for President Obasanjo's Zoo in Abuja. Captured from the wild in the Fort Rixon area several months ago, he has not adapted at all to being in captivity and is extremely stressed. ZNSPCA is lobbying Government for his immediate release and have also informed CITES in Geneva.

TRAINING - A successful Inspectors' Training Course was held in March 2003, attended by trainees from many SPCA Centres. We are pleased to report that four of these have passed their Inspector's exam and have now been officially appointed by Government as Inspectors to uphold the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

In September of 2003 I was invited by the Committee of the Mutare SPCA to give a brief Workshop on the Policies and Procedures of the SPCA in Zimbabwe. Held over two days – it appeared to be successful and those attending said they had learnt a great deal.

PROSECUTIONS - Whilst the aim of ZNSPCA is to educate and create a better awareness of kindness to animals, inevitably there are cases that require prosecution. We are pleased to report that ZNSPCA won all of the cases it took to Court in 2003.

A great deal of credit for this must go to our Inspector Simon Chikadaya (a retired policeman) who has prepared most of our dockets in a very professional manner.

Notable Cases:

1. Mr Phillip Hapelt of Gweru – found Guilty and fined for cruelty to a horse.
2. Command Security Company in Ruwa – found Guilty and fined for cruelty to five puppies.
3. Mr Zvakavapano of Mazoe - found Guilty and fined for cruelty to 7 goats.
4. Mr Mike Doorman of Banket – found Guilty and fined for cruelty to an ex-Tredar security dog.
5. Power Guard Security of Harare – found Guilty and fined for cruelty to two dogs.
6. Sam Levy of Harare – found Guilty and fined for cruelty to 147 weaners on his Nyabira Farm. This was his second conviction under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

7. Mr Denload Muchena – found Guilty and fined for cruelty to a German Shepherd Dog. This was the first conviction of a settler who took the dog during a farm invasion and forced it walk through the bush for 5 days.

We currently have another seven cases pending in the Courts. Five of these involve cruelty to livestock, in particular dairy cows, where the suffering inflicted has been immense.

We are also holding several dockets relating to cruelty cases which have occurred during the conflict over land. We will not proceed with these cases at present as this could jeopardise the lives of other animals and put witnesses at risk.

In 2004 the ZNSPCA Team of Inspectors will strive to do our best to prevent the abuse of animals in Zimbabwe. However, due to the current political situation prevailing, it is becoming increasingly difficult to do our job.

MERYL HARRISON
CHIEF INSPECTOR
ZNSPCA

UPDATE 13 FEBRUARY 2004

Many of you would have received the attached report regarding the attack on Charleswood Estate in Chimanimani (the property of opposition MP, Roy Bennett), which occurred on Sunday night, during which a farm worker was shot dead.

Sadly, animals were once again innocent victims during the ongoing violent land dispute.

Once they were able to gain the necessary authority, Meryl, Addmore and Simon, spent Tuesday and Wednesday attending to the cattle which had been brutally attacked. 30 head of cattle, mainly calves, were treated for axe wounds. In describing the injuries, Meryl said that most of the blows were so severe that the bone was exposed. Most of the injuries were on the legs or across the back towards the base of the spine, with some cattle losing the use of their tale. The team had to PTS one calf whose leg was hanging on by a strip of flesh. There had also been an attempt to hack off the ears of several animals. The calf reported to have an arrow imbedded in its back was found and the arrow head was removed and the wound treated.

Whilst there, the team attended to the bull which was axed in March 2003 when the workers and cattle were also attacked. Details of this attack were in my 08 April 2003 update. The bull's old injury had become infected and he was treated with the necessary antibiotics.

In my April update I also reported on the Security Manager who was hospitalised due to his injuries after his prolonged beating with a truncheon encased in a metal pipe. Amos is reportedly 'hated' by the 'settlers' as he has always been outspoken about the situation and the workers state that it is his courage which has kept everyone going.

On Sunday night whilst Amos was having supper with his wife and son, their pet Terrier X, 'Bokkie', alerted them that something was wrong when he ran outside and started barking furiously. A large group of settlers attacked the house and set fire to it using petrol bombs, with the family and their pet cat still inside. They would have been killed in the fire if farm workers had not arrived to chase off the settlers. The family managed to get out but it is feared that the cat was killed in the fire. No remains were found but the entire house and its contents were reduced to ashes. Amos thought that Bokkie had also been killed in the fire, not knowing that the dog was attacked when he tried to protect his family.

When the team arrived, they found Bokkie had made it back to his home and was sitting patiently in the ashes, waiting for his owner. His leg had been broken near the hip. The team took him to a vet in Mutare who is operating on him this morning to put a pin in the leg.

Meryl reported that those responsible for the shooting on the farm have not been arrested and were in fact still present whilst the team were there.

Amos and his family lost everything in the fire, including his vehicle which was also set ablaze. 'Bokkie' is all they have left. Amos said the dog has been with them for 2 years and is a member of the family. Meryl assured him that the ZNSPCA would take care of him until he is fully recovered and can be reunited with his 'family'.

Before the Chimanimani attack, Meryl managed to type up a 'overview' of the Inspectorate's activities in 2003, which I will send out in a separate e-mail.

With the farm rescues now well into their fourth year, as always, we thank you all for your unfailing encouragement and support.

Regards, Bernice

ZNSPCA UPDATE 04 MAY 2004

With great sadness we advise that Colin Anderson, founder member of the Blue Cross in Zimbabwe, has passed away following a short illness. The Society will forever owe a debt of gratitude to Colin who has left behind such a wonderful legacy. The challenging Blue Cross has become a favourite event for local and regional cyclists and walkers who dare to care, about the animals of Zimbabwe.

Many past participants attended Colin's funeral service in Harare, and in a fitting tribute to Colin, wore their Blue Cross medals.

On to recent animals welfare cases here. Starting on a positive note, having pursued their case against a Ruwa ZANU PF Councillor for assaulting two ZNSPCA Inspectors, the Councillor pleaded guilty and was fined.

Earlier this year, a couple returning to Zambia who had stopped to change a tyre near Eagle's Nest, spotted a Monty, in a field - the horse was nothing but skin and bone and they reported the pitiful sight to the ZNSPCA. He was rescued, received veterinary treatment and has happily been found a good home - one of the few fortunate ones.**

Monty had been left behind by a commercial farmer who was evicted from his farm during the land invasions. The horse was left with a new farmer and for a year was severely mistreated, being ridden by all the farm workers to round up cattle.

The ZNSPCA received a tip off that Harare Municipal security dogs were starving and investigations revealed this to be true. None of the four Municipal security dog facilities in Harare had dog meal, and meat was only being provided when one of the municipal cattle died. All dogs were emaciated and three had to be PTS. Under threat of prosecution, dog meal is now being provided and all animals are gaining weight. The situation will be closely monitored.

Dairy herds continue to have a very rough time and following another tip off, a herd in very bad condition was attended to in Beatrice. Many of the cows were suffering from a disease called Senkoba, which results in bleeding lesions on affected animals. The cattle belong to another absentee, farmer who has not monitored the condition of the herd or managed their feeding and welfare. Fortunately he has responded positively to warnings.

ZNSPCA now attend monthly cattle auctions due to the manner in which cattle have been transported, loaded and off-loaded, with some buyers taking two or three days to collect animals after the sale. Meryl reports that they have received excellent co-operation from the Auctioneers and they now read out a warning from the Inspectors before each sale.

Whilst on the road recently, the team stopped a bus from Mutare carrying 15 goats on the roof (which is illegal). It turned out the owner of the goats was a policeman. Further investigations by ZNSPCA and Police Rusape revealed the goats had actually been stolen.

Mbezi Game Lodge was invaded again and ZNSPCA was called in to rescue a parrot, cat and tortoise after the owner had been violently evicted. A day later the team supervised the loading and removal of part of the cattle herd.

ZNSPCA were also involved in the relocation of several impala and zebra from Willdale Farm, which has been designated. Game Management Services carried out the capture and were very organized and used a helicopter very skillfully to herd the animals. The relocation was arranged by Johnnie Rodrigues of the Zimbabwe Conservations Task Force and went very smoothly with minimum stress caused to the animals.**

The ZNSPCA team was called to attend a quite horrific stock theft case. Several goats and weaners had been stolen and the goats had been hung upside down alive by their hind legs from trees using wire. The cattle were immobilized by having barbed wire tied very tightly around their back legs - one animal subsequently died.** The animals had been left like this for 3 days and nights before they were found. The accused has been arrested and is being charged with stock theft and cruelty to animals.

We regret to report that the team have once again had to return to Charleswood Estate in Chimanimani. The army have taken over completely, with a high ranking officer having taken up residence in the house, which still contains all of Roy Bennett's clothing and personal belongings.

When Meryl and Simon arrived, accompanied by only one policeman, they found a boom across the entrance and army tents. The policeman was very nervous. The soldiers manning the boom let the team through but another soldier ran down the hill shouting „the Colonel is not here%. The team made it on to the farm and started attending to the cattle - one calf had been axed across the head.

They found that the bull they had treated twice previously had died. The calf which had an arrow head removed from its back on the last visit was also not doing well workers advised that all vet meds were locked up. An army officer informed Meryl that workers merely had to ask if they wanted anything but workers are obviously too scared to approach army details.

One dog was recovered which had been left behind by former farm workers who had managed to sneak off the farm. The family's rabbits were not in their hutches presumably eaten along with two chickens.

The phones to the farmhouse had been cut and although the team made a point of not saying much to the farm workers, as there were army details present everywhere, Simon and Meryl found them to be depressed, frightened and confused.

As they were leaving the farm, Meryl observed about 50 workers being rounded up outside the house. We can only hope that there were no repercussions, to ZNSPCA being there. Meryl did go to great lengths to explain to the army that they were merely there on a follow-up visit to check on the animals which had been injured previously.

On the way out the team encountered a group of ZANU PF militia at the boom who were rather less cordial than the army details.

Best regards and appreciation, Bernice