

This an email sent to Dr Richard Ryder who is a member of the RSPCA ruling council who according to Wikipedia:

'is a British psychologist who came to public attention in 1969 when, after having worked in animal research laboratories, he began to speak out against animal testing, and became one of the pioneers of the modern animal liberation movement'

EMAIL SENT TO RICHARD RYDER 2nd October 2009

Dear Dr Ryder

Jayne Shenstone has advised me of your responses to her emails. I now wish to add my own comments regarding the ten German Shepherds killed by the RSPCA with captive bolts.

To say that Jayne and I were disappointed, by your first response in particular, would be an understatement. I appreciate that a damage limitation exercise must be the order of the day but it would appear, from all responses received to date from you and other Trustees, that the seriousness of this situation and its impact on the reputation of the RSPCA (at an international level) has been grossly underestimated. In your second response you say 'This is the side of the RSPCA's work I am least involved with.' Does this mean that you are unaware of some of the RSPCA's practices which have resulted in the unprecedented level of dissatisfaction currently being expressed by the general public? If you require proof, I will happily provide it.

With regards to the current furore over the ten German Shepherds, I too will quote something from the principle upon which you have based your ethics.

'PAIN IS THE GREAT EVIL AND INFLICTING PAIN UPON OTHERS IS THE ONLY WRONG'

'Suffering is a specific real phenomena. It is a concrete thing sticking to the bodies of individuals who suffer.

It exists in space and time in a given number of nervous systems.

It reacts to actions applied to it,

it can be reduced,

it can be stopped

it can be prevented.'

In the case of the ten German Shepherds, this 'great evil' could and most definitely should have been stopped; prevented; or at least reduced. And yet you, the proponent of 'Painism', appear to accept what happened by stating in your first response, '*I am told the dogs were dangerous, diseased and unhomable. Death by shooting is often considerably more humane.'*

I can only conclude from this that you had not fully assimilated all the facts which were initially presented to you by Jayne. Therefore, I will now highlight some of those facts again using your own response as a starting point.

'The dogs were dangerous.' As you are aware these dogs were left to fend for themselves after their owner died. It would be logical to assume that they would have been distressed, confused and bewildered. They may even have been hungry and thirsty. Whatever their physical and/or psychological state, these recently bereaved dogs deserved to be helped – not shot. German Shepherds are known for their loyalty, courage

and strong guarding instincts. Little wonder then that they reacted as they did when a uniformed stranger arrived on their property.

'The dogs were dangerous.' Despite the RSPCA Inspector declaring that the dogs were too dangerous to re-home, he initially advised the deceased's next-of-kin to contact other animal rescues for help. Why did the Inspector give this advice if the dogs were so dangerous? If they were too dangerous to be re-homed by the RSPCA they were equally too dangerous to be re-homed by any other rescues, thus the Inspector behaved in a highly irresponsible manner. Let us then assume that the dogs were not so dangerous after all and it was therefore safe for the Inspector to advise the next-of-kin to seek help elsewhere. Why did that same inspector not explain to the next-of-kin which rescues would be the most appropriate ones to contact? Better still, why did that same inspector not take it upon himself to contact breed specific rescues and therefore remove the onus, not to mention the stress, from the next-of-kin? Please note - none of the German Shepherd Rescues were contacted and they have all said they would have worked something out between them to take these dogs. And whilst on the subject of other rescues, why did the RSPCA state that Dogs Trust was one of the rescues which **were** contacted? I have an email from Dogs Trust which confirms they have no record of any such contact ever being made.

The dogs were 'diseased'. A severe skin condition was given as another 'reason' for shooting these dogs rather than euthanizing them by means of humane injection. Initially, the RSPCA's statements claimed that, in addition to the dogs being too dangerous to approach, the condition of their skin would have made it too stressful for them to have their fur shaved in readiness for an injection. In a subsequent statement this reason was then played down in order to focus on the 'dangerous dogs' aspect. By the RSPCA's own admission, no vet was ever called to assess these dogs. When asked how the diagnosis was made if no one could get near; the RSPCA stated that the dogs' skin disease was so severe it was easily seen by the inspector 'from a distance'. Since when has an inspector (no matter how experienced) been qualified to make such a diagnosis in this manner? I have spoken to a veterinary surgeon who says it would not be possible to ascertain the severity of a skin infection from a distance. No explanation has ever been given as to whether ALL of the dogs were suffering from this condition and, in the opinion of many, this secondary reason for shooting the dogs was a shocking indictment of the RSPCA's lack of compassion. It was also yet another serious breach of the RSPCA's own mandate in respect of animal welfare.

'The dogs were dangerous.' To return to the 'dangerous' aspect. This then was given as the main reason for shooting the dogs because it was impossible to get close enough for injection. It was therefore decided that shooting by captive bolt would be the most humane method. Apart from the fact that the RSPCA is a member of the WSPA which declares this method as unacceptable and therefore inhumane for dogs and cats because of the high risk of mis-stunning, how was it possible to get close enough to use captive bolts on these so-called 'aggressive' animals? A captive bolt must be held close against the animal's head. It also has to be placed in a very precise position to ensure that the animal does not regain consciousness prior to the ultimate method of euthanasia. So, the next question is – why – if it was possible to get close enough to use a captive bolt – was it not equally possible to get close enough to sedate these dogs? They could then have been removed to a place of safety. Alternatively, just as animals in the wild are sedated from a distance, why could these dogs not have been sedated in a similar manner – or given food laced with a sedative?

'The dogs were dangerous.' I continue to highlight this aspect because it is the main thrust of the RSPCA's argument. By now it should be apparent that I and countless others cannot accept their reasons for shooting these tragic dogs with captive bolts. When the RSPCA were asked if the dogs witnessed their companions being shot, a further statement was issued which explained that each dog was removed separately by means of a gripper and taken outside 'for some brief exercise' before being killed. If this was meant to reassure the general public, it did nothing of the kind. Instead it emphatically begged the next logical question – why – if it was possible to remove each dog via a gripper – was it not within the capabilities of these 'experienced' inspectors to remove each dog to a place of safety where it could have been assessed in a calm environment away from the pack?? Each dog could then have been treated and ultimately rehabilitated by a breed specific rescue, if not by the RSPCA.

An outraged public hijacked the RSPCA's own Facebook page over a period of approx nine days about this atrocity. One submission appeared to be from an employee of the RSPCA who commented on how expensive it would have been if these dogs had been rescued by the RSPCA. It was pointed out that the costs for treating any skin conditions, together with kennelling and rehabilitation costs, would have been excessive. That particular submission was quickly removed from facebook but the general public had already come to the conclusion that the shooting of the unfortunate animals had nothing to do with compassion, as claimed by the RSPCA, but everything to do with time and money. It was simply quicker and cheaper to shoot the German Shepherds – just as it was quicker and cheaper to shoot two elderly Basset Hounds from Ipswich in 2004. The reason given for shooting the Basset Hounds was because their skin was too loose and the leg conformation made it difficult to administer an injection. What a dreadful and disgraceful excuse for despatching two harmless old dogs in such an outrageous manner. Please note - two members of staff from that particular branch of the RSPCA resigned in protest.

If the Society was short of funds, as it regularly would have us believe, then, although it could never justify the methods used, it could perhaps argue that it had no choice but to euthanize the ten German Shepherds dogs. But the Society is NOT short of funds. Thanks to the generosity of the general public, the RSPCA is a hugely wealthy organisation. Its incoming resources over a four year period between 2005 and 2008 came to a staggering:

£444,664,000

The bulk of that money came from the general public but a massive **£20,686,000** was earned from investments over that same 4 year period. Imagine how many millions must be invested to bring in that kind of income!

The RSPCA's balance sheets for 2007 and 2008 showed:

Total Fixed Assets.	
2007	£206,532,000
2008	£164,824,000
Total Current Assets Including Cash on Deposit, Cash in Bank and in Hand	
2007	£28,090,000
(including £9,509,000 on deposit and £10,179,000 cash at bank and in hand)	
2008	£32,970,000
(including £3,056,000 on deposit and £13,444,000 cash at bank and in hand)	

Free Reserves

2007	£108,300,000
2008	£70,700,000

There is no disputing that the RSPCA has more than enough millions in its coffers to satisfy significantly more of the public's need for its services than it currently achieves. None of that vast wealth goes to its 174 local branches which, by the Society's own admission, do the bulk of the excellent work normally associated with the RSPCA. These branches are all independently registered charities, run mostly by volunteers who have to raise all their own funding. A small handful of local branches now state they receive limited funding but the majority continue to declare they receive no financial assistance whatsoever from Central Office. And yet the RSPCA states in its Trustees Report that it expended more than £8m on support to branches in 2008. This anomaly has not been satisfactorily explained. What is certain is that the local branches have to pay a sum of money to the Society as and when required, and that this sum must take priority over all other payments the branch has to make elsewhere. (Rule 10.2 Branch Rules) The general public are not aware of this fact. Nor are they aware that the millions of pounds they regularly donate to the RSPCA goes to Central Office and not to their local branches, and that many more millions have to be raised by the local branches across England and Wales in order to survive.

So, having established that the RSPCA is a massively wealthy organisation, I will now respond to your comment that *'there are more dogs in this country than there are responsible homes, and that too many dogs, cats and horses are being bred – so what is the solution?'*

The main solution should come from the RSPCA. The Society clearly has sufficient 'donated' funds to make a huge difference. Why not make free neutering a priority for a start? This would significantly reduce numbers of unwanted animals. As for current numbers of homeless animals, why not build more animal establishments to meet part of that demand? In 2008 the RSPCA spent approx **£25m on animal establishments** and yet it spent almost as much, i.e. a staggering **£22.5m on generating further funds**. How can the RSPCA justify spending publicly donated money in this way when they killed almost 8,500 dogs and 12,500 cats in 2008, many of them healthy or treatable? And please don't quote the RSPCA's platitudes as to why they 'reluctantly' kill healthy animals because they deem it cruel to keep dogs and cats confined for too long. It is a fact that the RSPCA's National policy gives an animal of 'unknown origin' only seven days before it is killed.

'Death by shooting is often considerably more humane.' Finally, in response to your comment that shooting is often more humane, disregarding your own views on painism, it might be argued that shooting by free bullet MIGHT be humane – but who can say with certainty that this is true? Having held one of my own dogs whilst she was gently euthanized by injection when she was old and sick, I can personally vouch for the humaneness and serenity of that method.

'Death by shooting is often considerably more humane.' To return to the killing of the ten German Shepherds. They were not shot by the 'arguably' humane method of a free bullet. They were killed by captive bolt. The World Society for the Protection of Animals has this to say about physical methods of euthanizing dogs and cats:

For several reasons, physical methods for the euthanasia of dogs and cats are generally not recommended. Some methods are likely to cause severe pain and suffering to animals and are therefore considered inhumane, and unsuitable for euthanasia. The only physical method considered conditionally acceptable by WSPA – shooting with a free bullet – could be used as a last resort in an emergency situation when no other methods are possible, but not as routine.

The WSPA then goes on to clarify which physical methods are UNACCEPTABLE. The first of these is the CAPTIVE BOLT:

Although widely used and accepted as a stunning procedure for the slaughter of large livestock species, this method is generally considered inappropriate for dogs and cats. (European Food Safety Authority. 2005). The penetrative captive bolt pistol must be placed in contact with the animals' skull and precise positioning is essential so that the bolt penetrates the correct area of the brain first time. Animals must be adequately restrained so that the head remains steady (Carding, 1977; Dennis et al., 1988; Beaver et al., 2001), which makes this method particularly difficult with fearful and aggressive dogs and cats (Carding, 1977). Furthermore, the conformational differences between the skulls of individuals and breeds of dogs increase the risk of a mis-stun. The principle skull types are dolichocephalic (long narrow head) brachycephalic (short wide heads) and mesaticephalic (medium proportions)

Use of a captive bolt may be aesthetically unpleasant to the operator, especially as further measures are necessary (e.g. pithing or exsanguinations) to ensure death (Beaver et al., 2001) The bleeding that occurs after penetration of the skull and after further pithing creates a hazard for the operator, due to the risk of coming into contact with blood and brain matter. This risk may be of particular concern in rabies-endemic areas.

As there is a high risk of mis-stunning through inadequate use of the penetrative captive bolt, and hence causing pain and distress, the WSPA considers this an unacceptable method for the euthanasia of dogs and cats.

I trust, Dr Ryder, you are now more aware of the inhumane method used to kill the ten German Shepherds who were unfortunate enough to be signed over to the RSPCA. I trust you are also aware that the RSPCA were seriously in breach of their own policies and mandates. Not only is the RSPCA a member of the World Society for the Protection on Animals and should therefore be in agreement with the above, it also states quite categorically that:

Where euthanasia is carried out it is done by trained operators using approved methods. Providing a humane ending is our main concern followed by reducing health and safety risks to the individual carrying it out. We do NOT use deadbolts. Animals are euthanized by injection.

Public outrage over the killing of these dogs is still rife and continues to spread across the internet. This atrocity together with a growing body of evidence that the RSPCA repeatedly fails to meet the public's expectations and regularly breaches its own policies, has resulted in at least two petitions being set up, one demanding an end to the use of captive bolts on

companion animals; the other demanding an investigation into the operations of the RSPCA.

As a Trustee of this once respected organisation, it is to be hoped that you will now share this information with other members of council to ensure that the seriousness of the situation is properly acknowledged. It is also to be hoped that stricter adherence to the RSPCA's own policies are enforced from now on and that action is taken against the individuals who carried out this atrocity.

Yours sincerely

Kathleen M

7th October 2009 we received this response from Dr Ryder:

Dear Kathleen

Thank you for your very detailed communications. You really should not be targeting me. I am the person who raised this question of the continuing euthanasia of healthy dogs at the last AGM of the Society, calling for an end to it! Please divert some of your intelligence and energy onto the Officers of the Society who are better placed than I am to pursue the policy of seeking dog registration/chipping/neutering. Then get yourself elected to the RSPCA Council where you can help those like me who want to transform the Society into a more dynamic, passionate, modern and effective body!

Good wishes

Dr Richard D Ryder

cc Jayne Shenstone