

The following letter and a follow up detailed letter of the Lifeforce investigation was sent to the Vancouver Parks Board, Mayor and Councillors and Vancouver Coastal Health. In addition, Lifeforce will be releasing a 60 page report on Petting Zoos in the near future.

Emails: Parks Board Commissioners - pbcomment@vancouver.ca
Mayor and Council - mayorandcouncil@vancouver.ca



OPEN LETTER
March 19, 2008

URGENT! FOR YOUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.

To: Vancouver Parks Board Commissioners and Vancouver Mayor and Councillors
From: Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce Director
Re: Please Stop Bunny Exploitation and Clean Up the Petting Zoo!

Animal Exploitation

During a recent Lifeforce investigation of the Stanley Park Farmyard we were shocked to see seven bunnies treated like props in an approximate 20" x 40" window display. It is not only cruel to keep them in such a small space with kids banging on the windows but it also promotes the purchase of such animals at Easter. After Easter when the novelty wears off they are often disposed of by such practises as illegal dumping in public parks.

The Park Board Easter Poster, March 21 – 24th, states "All Day Hunts...Meet the new Baby Bunnies, Goats, Lambs and Chicks."

The bunnies should be immediately removed from the window display. The bunnies and any other baby animals must be provided with large enclosures with private areas such as "dens" for the bunnies.

The bunnies were obtained to be on loan from Aldor Acres in Fort Langley where they run petting zoos and breed animals to get the cute little babies to profit from. At the end of the season he sells the animals to the Fraser Valley Auction (FVA) that is a horrible place where sick, injured animals are routinely mistreated and killed for food. This is the same place where Lifeforce exposed the abuse of previous Stanley Park petting zoo animals in the 80s. At that time the Vancouver Parks Board agreed to stop auctioning them off. However, doing any business with animal dealers that dump the animals at FVA should also have been part of the prohibition.

Human Health Risks

In addition, to the animal exploitation the "Farmyard" was contaminated with animal feces and urine that pose a major health threat to people petting the animals, touching gates and walking through the feces and pools of urine.

People visiting petting zoos must be aware of methods to prevent serious infections and illness. Lifeforce has found that many operators try to downplay the threats to humans. Health Agencies can only suggest guidelines because there are no regulations. Petting zoos are hotbeds of serious pathogens, including E. coli and salmonella bacteria. Numerous children have been severely sickened as a result of visiting animal displays, and some have even died. Those who come in contact with E. coli can develop bloody diarrhea, anemia, chronic kidney failure, or neurological impairments such as seizures or strokes.

There must be more frequent hosing and sanitizing, adequate supervision, more signage with instructions to wash hands and change shoes/clothing and more hand washing stations (as per Fraser Health Authority and BCCDC Guidelines). The animals' hay was contaminated and must not be dispersed on the hardtop. A full report of the numerous problems that we found at yours and several other petting zoo operations will be forthcoming.

Please contact us immediately to discuss ways to remedy these violations of animal rights and human safety. Please stop treating animals as commodities and please help protect people from health risks.

I can be reached at 604-649-5258 or lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com