

New Jersey
State Commission of Investigation



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For immediate release

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SCI ISSUES REPORT ON SPCA
ABUSES

TRENTON – The State Commission of Investigation today released the report of an investigation into widespread abuse and malfeasance by elements of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in New Jersey.

The Commission found that SPCAs at both the state and county levels have been subverted to the point where, in many instances, they are incapable of fulfilling their primary statutory mission – the effective and reliable enforcement of animal cruelty laws.

“The issue is no longer whether or how to fix this errant group of self-appointed, self-directed and uncontrolled entities, but whether to eliminate the archaic system entirely,” the report states. “The Commission concludes that the time has come to repeal the government authority vested in the SPCAs and place the function of enforcing the cruelty laws within the government’s stratified hierarchy of law enforcement.”

Among the Commission’s key findings:

?? SPCA officials diverted substantial funds and property meant for animal welfare for personal use.

?? Monetary bequests left by deceased individuals to benefit animals were used instead to pay for firearms, ammunition, vehicles and other items unrelated to animal welfare.

?? County SPCA organizations, some of which operate in paramilitary fashion, have become havens for gun-carrying “wannabe” police officers motivated by personal gain. These individuals operate without proper training or adequate oversight.

?? Conditions at an animal shelter administered by the Hudson County SPCA were found to be deplorable. While shelter officials skimmed patron fees and sold dog food for personal profit, animals languished in overcrowded, poorly ventilated enclosures without adequate food, water or veterinary care.

?? The state and local system of shelter inspections was found to be inadequate and replete with weaknesses, including lax enforcement, lack of follow-up inspections and wide variations in the manner in which conditions are reported.

The report contains a series of recommendations for reforms related to the system under which SPCAs and animal shelters currently operate.

The Commission referred the findings of its investigation to the following government agencies for whatever action they deem appropriate: the Office of the New Jersey Attorney General, Division of Criminal Justice and Division of Consumer Affairs; the U.S. Internal Revenue Service; the New Jersey Division of Taxation; the New Jersey Division of Purchase and Property; and various state regulatory boards.