

ROBERT KENNEY BVSc,

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

My name is Robert Kenney and I graduated from Melbourne University Veterinary School in December 1976. I was employed for two years in the practice of Dr John Murray at [REDACTED]. On leaving there I commenced a house call practice, which I continue to this day.

My clientele are largely dog and cat breeders. For the last thirteen years I have been the Vet. for the dog section of the Royal Melbourne Show and have, for the last three years, assumed the same role for the cat section following the retirement of Dr Hugh Worth.

I have a wealth of experience in this field. It has only been in the last few years that I have had any contact with the RSPCA and some of these have given me cause for concern.

To me, the one case that best illustrates my concerns is that of [REDACTED], then of [REDACTED]. She rented this house with a fellow breeder [REDACTED]. Both are pensioners and the dogs provide them with great pleasure and enrichment. Whilst some may think dog breeding is lucrative, in my experience, most breeders only break even considering the time and money spent on caring for dogs that are pre or post breeding age. Most are lucky to break even. When a bitch has finished breeding many breeders choose to have them de-sexed and find a new home for them. Some stay on as old age pensioners. [REDACTED] has always had one poor waif that she has who was not suitable for either breeding or showing, Dopey, the chihuahua or now Weevil the Tibetan Spaniel.

One such bitch I de-sexed for her was placed in a home to a woman who was concerned that the dog would not look her in the eye. This is unfortunately a breed trait. She took it to the vet clinic run by the RSPCA in Pearcedale where the dog was diagnosed as having been stressed due to the debarking performed on it legally some years before. No mention or consideration was given to the fact that the dog had recently changed owner and had been desexed. The bitch was euthanased shortly after this [REDACTED] was raided by the RSPCA with police and a film crew and vehicles in total equipped to rescue her dogs. The effect was one of shock and awe and the RSPCA removed 6 dogs, a small proportion of these two sixty plus women had. They were returned to [REDACTED] after 10 days and the two entire males had become overly aggressive to every dog and person. I attempted to make contact with the RSPCA inspector on this matter on several occasions but received no response. As the two dogs were no longer part of the group and [REDACTED] didn't want to place an aggressive dog in another home I euthanised both dogs. The death toll now is three healthy dogs!

Ten months later [REDACTED] is charged with showing a dog that has been debarked very few people were aware of this RSPCA law. She went to court was fined and put on a good behaviour bond. She had the procedure done legally as the dog's barking was distressing her next door neighbour who was suffering cancer.

Subsequent visits from the council and her decreasing the size of her group the two ladies were stressed to the point that they have moved twice and now find themselves living in [REDACTED]. No other charges were made by the RSPCA such as dog's health and condition, housing or any other of the large number of charges they can lay.

My concern in this case apart from the heavy handed approach to this woman, is the RSPCA's reticence to communicate with me or any other vet involved with these animals. My profession is accorded a certain status by the law and society and I am concerned that the RSPCA officers feel they cannot consult with us on such matters. A simple phone call to me by the euthanasing vet in Pearcedale could have saved the stress to these women and the loss of three healthy dogs.

I don't want to accuse the RSPCA as being blinkered when they think they see people thumbing their noses at legislation and dogma. I'll let you draw your own conclusions.

But surely we can't be considered as implicit in breeches of the act purely because we have seen their dogs. Most vets see a dog or cat presented in their surgery and can only judge their care on that visit. I, on the other hand, often but not always, see the dogs in their environment and I have dropped clients because I don't like what I see. In many cases I have offered advise to improve shortcomings in husbandry. I have dealt with some RSPCA officers and have worked well with them to get the right outcomes for the owners and the animals. I only wish that had occurred in the case of [REDACTED].

Yours faithfully

ROBERT KENNEY BVSc.