

[REDACTED]

January 11, 2016

Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Director of Animal Protection Services
10806 - 124 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, T5M 0H3
info@albertaspca.org

By Email

To whom it may concern:

Re: Failure of Peace Officers to Protect Starving Cattle

Please accept this formal complaint filed under s. 14 of the *Peace Officer Act* of Alberta. The following is a report of events relating to the discovery of starving and dead cattle in my area, and the inaction of Alberta SPCA's peace officers that is allowing this concerning neglect to continue. This situation is urgent and should be dealt with as such.

December 28, 2015:

A local rancher came to my house in the early afternoon to report what he heard from another local rancher, regarding cattle in distress and three dead, in our area. He did not want to get involved for fear of retaliation by the suspected owners. He did not say who the owners were.

We drove my vehicle to the site, (via a road allowance) where we saw 80-100 severely distressed cattle, and one deceased, in a field. There was one set of tire tracks in the snow on this road allowance, so someone had driven past these cattle already.

As we approached half a mile, the first cattle we noticed were loose and wandering on the road allowance and another unfenced field north of the subject property. There were red, blonde and black cows of various sizes and ages. Their backbones, hips, shoulders and ribs were visible. They made eye contact with us and continued moving slowly looking for something to eat on the ground. There was approximately five or six of these cows moving around. I would rate their body condition at a score of 2 (see Appendix 2). My photos clearly show this. See photo #1 (see Appendix 1).

Next we saw a group of about twenty younger, smaller, more emaciated cattle standing huddled together, motionless, near a torn down barbed wire fence next to a clump of bushes. The cows closest to my vehicle were black, with the rest being blonde and red. All of them had prominent backbones, hips and shoulder bones. They had recessed tail head areas and clearly visible ribs. Some had ear tags and some did not. Most of them had their

heads hanging down, although a few looked up at us. One of the black cows facing me was standing with front legs splayed apart, looking as if it would fall down. See photo #3.

A red cow facing away from me, in terribly emaciated condition, appeared to be straining to pass a bowel movement or urinate; the hind legs were underneath the animal and the back was hunched up while the tail was lifted slightly, as the animal strained. It was unable to pass anything. See photo #4.

As we drove past these cows they did not move. When we turned around and drove back, and I got out of my vehicle to take pictures, these cows still remained motionless. I would rate their body condition at a score of 1. My photos clearly show this.

The rancher told me the cattle had “feeder” brands, and were on leased property. We also saw a larger, white/blonde cow walking outside the field. The rancher with me pointed out the brand was the letter “L” over a “crossbow” which he referred to as a “feeder” brand. He instructed me to photograph this, which I did. See photo #5.

He said this could be used for identification of the cattle and their owner. (Later he advised me that feeder cattle are sold by the Feeder Association to people who re-sell them after feeding them.) The brand is clearly visible in my photo. This cow was moving and made eye contact with us. I would rate the body condition of this cow at a score of 2.

As we looked across the fields from the road allowance, we saw more emaciated cattle huddled in groups in the distance, and a dead cow lying on its side in the open field. It appeared as a motionless, shrivelled carcass with bones protruding from all areas. See photo #2. The rancher thought we witnessed 80-100 cattle all together at this location. He stressed that the owner of the land (whose name he gave me) was not the owner of the starving cattle. He said the man who alerted him to this situation had reported three dead cows on the ground, with one nearly all consumed by wildlife.

We then drove down a nearby road to look at a herd of cattle I had seen earlier, without food or water, appearing in very poor condition. The rancher informed me these were on leased land as well, and agreed they were in poor condition.

At this second location, a herd of cattle were without food and water for an unknown period of time, and appeared extremely thin with backbones, hips and shoulder bones visible. One of the worst looking cows was standing near the fence by the road so I took a close photo of her. This cow also displayed a recessed tail head area and some visible ribs. See photo #6. This would be a body score of 2.

I called the Alberta SPCA this same day at 2:30PM, to report these two herds. I called them again at 4:30PM and 7:00PM. Each time I was told that I would be contacted by an officer. At 7:00PM, a man from the Edmonton office of the ASPCA called me and said they were looking into it. I believe his name was Dodds. At 8:30PM Rick Wheatley of the ASPCA (whom I know, and have dealt with in the past) called me and said he would investigate.

December 29, 2015:

At 9:30AM I went to the High River office of Alberta Farm Animal Care. It was closed. I called their ALERT line and reported the distressed cattle. They said they were unable to do anything because I had already contacted the ASPCA. They did not ask for any information on the starving and dead cattle at all. Their mandate clearly states they are available to be contacted in the case of animals in distress.

At 10:00AM I called Rick Wheatley (ASPCA) and asked if he had attended the scene yet. At 10:20AM he reported that all the cattle, including the dead had been moved from the first location. He had followed the tracks over to the Roseburn Feedlot, owned by the Morrison family.

At noon I met with Martin Gaudet of the Okotoks RCMP (off duty) to discuss my personal safety options, after being advised by a local rancher that the Morrison family were considered to be ruthless.

At 2:30PM Rick Wheatley contacted me and said the cattle were being fed at the Roseburn Feedlot. He advised that the second herd I reported was also owned by the Morrison's, and would be moved to the feedlot soon, where there was food and water.

December 30, 2015:

At 9:00AM I drove by the second herd of cattle to see if they had been fed yet. They had not. I then dropped off a two page report outlining my personal safety concerns, to the Okotoks RCMP detachment, for Martin Gaudet.

At 2:00PM the cattle from the second location were gone, and Rick Wheatley advised me he witnessed them being loaded up to be transported to the Morrison owned feedlots.

At 3:00PM I hired a security guard for myself.

January 4, 2016:

At 11:40AM I went to the offices of Little Bow Feeder Association in High River, and reported the situation to a woman. She said she would send her inspector to the Roseburn feedlot that afternoon, but could not tell me anything. She did not want photos or any further information regarding the cattle.

January 5, 2016:

At approximately 1:15PM I went to the Alberta Farm Animal Care offices in High River again, and spoke with Kristen McDonald at length. She said she would contact Rick Wheatley of the ASPCA to keep abreast of the situation, but said they were not in a position to help because they had no authority to seize the cattle from the feedlot operators.

My Background:

I have owned animals most of my life, and currently have two cats, three cows and three horses. I am familiar with good animal care practices and what healthy cattle should look like.

My experiences with Rick Wheatley of the Alberta SPCA have been largely positive. He has always responded to my requests when I have called him directly on his cell phone, to help with injured wildlife etc. Usually I call the ASPCA complaint line, and Rick is the person they usually send. He has always acted in a professional manner, and with confidence. However, in this case, I am concerned that for whatever reason Rick isn't acting to protect animals that are in urgent need of help. Instead, the animals have been returned to the care of the people responsible for starving them.

I am passionate about the welfare of animals, and will be relentless in my quest to resolve this current situation, which haunts me every waking hour.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

Appendix 1: Photos

1)First photo [REDACTED]: This photo shows two cows, one blonde and one black, that were among the few cows moving around, that we first came upon at this location. Their body condition score I would rate a 2.



2)Dead cow : This photo shows a carcass lying on the ground in the open field. Boney protrusions can be seen.



3)Starving cattle: This photo shows the smaller black cows in the foreground, with red and blonde cows behind, huddled in a group next to downed fences and a few bushes. The black cow in the centre of the picture facing us, was one of the most emaciated, and had the front legs splayed apart with the head hanging down.



4)Severe distress: This photo shows a straining, severely emaciated and dehydrated red cow with the rear facing us. This cow would be a body score rate of 1.



5)Feeder brand: This photo shows a white/blonde cow facing us with a brand on the left ribs. The brand was an “L” over a “crossbow”, apparently used by the Feeder Association.



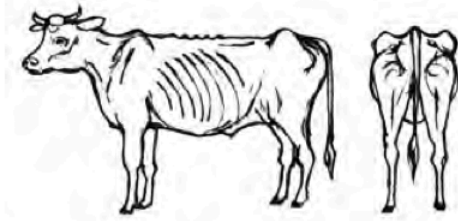
6)Starving herd #2: This photo shows a red cow standing next to a barbed wire fence in a field with other cattle. This cow showed very poor condition as described.



7)Herd #2: This photo shows two cows at the left of the picture in emaciated condition.

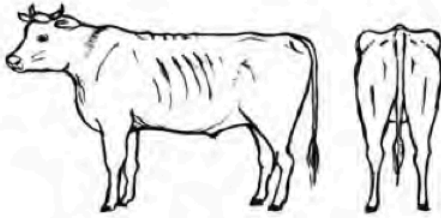


Appendix 2: Body Score Condition Chart



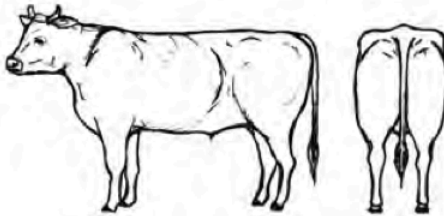
Condition score 1

Backbone prominent
Hips and shoulder bones prominent
Ribs clearly visible
Tail-head area recessed
Skeletal body outline



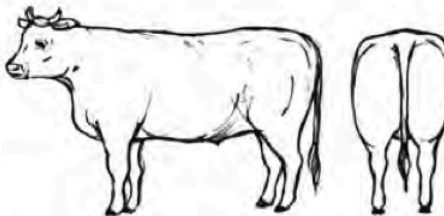
Condition score 2

Backbone visible
Hips and shoulder bones visible
Ribs visible faintly
Tail-head area slightly recessed
Body outline bony



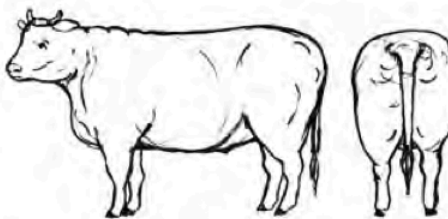
Condition score 3

Hip bones visible faintly
Ribs generally not visible
Tail-head area not recessed
Body outline almost smooth



Condition score 4

Hip bones not visible
Ribs well covered
Tail-head area slightly lumpy
Body outline rounded



Condition score 5

Hip bones showing fat deposit
Ribs very well covered
Tail-head area very lumpy
Body outline bulging due to fat