

Will Canadians Vote with Their Hearts?

A New Study Commissioned by WSPA Reveals Canadians Have Strong Views on Animal Welfare

Animal Well-being Weighs on the Minds of All Canadians

According to a recent survey done by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), almost **every Canadian (95%) agrees that animal pain and suffering should be reduced as much as possible** – even when those animals are raised to be slaughtered. Regardless of gender, age, region, voting inclination or hobbies both city- and country-dwelling **Canadians tend to share similarly compassionate views** on the fundamental value of all animals (pets, farm and wildlife).

Many Canadians wish to minimize and eventually eliminate all forms of animal cruelty and while responses did fluctuate somewhat depending on voting preference (**Conservatives 78%, Liberal 89%, NDP 95%, Green 89% and BQ 97%**) still more than three quarters of people support this view. Similarly, those respondents that rarely or never hunt and fish showed higher levels of support (91%) than those that often do (74%), but these results still **point to a remarkable and consistently high level of concern for animal well-being across all Canadian demographics.**

Canadian Law Makers Are Not Keeping Up with Our Views on Animal Welfare

Canadians' strong views on animal welfare are reflected in their opinions surrounding laws and legislation meant to protect farm animals and those kept as companions and pets. Almost three quarters of **Canadians would recognize that animals are more than just property by moving animal cruelty crimes out of the Crimes Against Property section of Canada's Criminal code** and still more Canadians (84%) would make it a more serious offense to brutally and viciously kill an animal. Such amendments could have prevented a New Brunswick man from being **acquitted on multiple counts of animal cruelty for killing five small dogs with a hammer** as under the law he had the right to destroy them since these animals did not suffer and were considered property.

Also many Canadians (85%) support creating a new offence making it illegal to poison, injure or kill a police dog or horse. Called Brigadier's Law named for a Toronto Police horse that was intentionally run down and killed in 2007, it would protect Law Enforcement Service animals and toughen penalties on those that do them harm.

Canadians' compassionate views towards farm animals also defy voting lines. Asked about confinement systems which restrict animals movement such as battery cages for egg-laying hens, sow stalls for pregnant pigs, and veal crates for calves, voters would overwhelmingly support creation of laws that would ensure farm animals have enough room to lie down, turn around, stretch their limbs and spread their wings (Conservatives 87%, Liberals 94%, NDP 98%, Green 95% and BQ 96%.)

With a federal election on the horizon, **WSPA is asking all political parties if they will listen to the majority of Canadians and support stronger amendments to the animal cruelty provisions under the Criminal Code.**

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For more information, interviews or images please contact:

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Quote from WSPA

"These polling statistics fly in the face of those who suggest there is an urban-rural divide when it comes to the way Canadians look at animal cruelty and animal welfare," Patrick Tohill, WSPA Programs Manager.

"No matter what their age, gender, vocation, or which political party they support, solid majorities of Canadians support the animal welfare movement's goals of reducing and eliminating animal cruelty. Indeed, the poll shows they support exactly those kinds of amendments to Canadian law that we've been putting forward." Patrick Tohill, WSPA Programs Manager.

About the survey: This study was commissioned by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and conducted by Harris/Decima via telephone from October 26 to November 7, 2010. A total of 1,007 Canadians were surveyed. The association margin of error is +/-3.1%, 19 times out of 20.

About the World Society for the Protection of Animals: For 30 years, the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has been working to end animal suffering and cruelty. WSPA's presence in more than 160 countries is a testament to our commitment to creating a world where animal welfare matters and to ending animal cruelty for good. We bring about change at both grassroots and governmental levels and we support and develop high-profile campaigns, scientifically-backed projects and innovative education initiatives. With our partners, governments and international agencies, WSPA also provides relief to animals affected by disasters.

Note for Editors:

1. An executive summary of survey findings is available in PDF format is available as an attachment to this release
2. The full survey findings report is available in PDF format via email at sharpe@wspa.ca