

PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

What does protection of animals mean? When did it start? What are its main goals and responsibilities?

Three organizations will be presented in order to make you acquainted with the oldest organization in the world, the largest international organization and the oldest and largest Hungarian association for the protection of animals, and to find answers to the above-listed questions.

I. The oldest animal protection association in the world: Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – RSPCA (pronounced ‘ár-esz-pí-szí-éj’) (www.rspca.org.uk)

THE PAST

London, 1822

Richard Martin, Member of Parliament, managed to get an Act through parliament to prevent “cruel and improper treatment of horses and cattle”. This was the first animal protection law in the history of mankind.

London, 1824

Richard Martin (“Humanity Dick”, as he was known), was one of the 22 founders of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals which was launched in 1824. The SPCA became the first national animal protection society in the world. At that time, compassion for animals was regarded as bizarre. Animals were considered as little more than commodities supplying food, transport or sport. In its early years the Society’s major campaign was to win over the hearts and minds of the general public, and to change people’s indifference to cruelty against animals.

As early as 1832, the Society wrote in its annual report that 181 (!) convictions (penal sentences) for cruelty against animals were achieved that year. This shows how positively the SPCA’s work influenced public opinion regarding the treatment of animals.

By 1840 the Society’s work was held in such high regard that Queen Victoria gave her permission for the SPCA to be called the **Royal** Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Its practical welfare work developed quickly. The single inspector appointed in London to check on markets and slaughterhouses, was joined by others. Together they formed a law enforcement body that pre-dated the police force. News of the work of the Society spread outside London, and by 1842 campaigners in Bath, Brighton, Bristol, Coventry and Scarborough had all requested the appointment of an inspector of their own.

THE PRESENT

The increasing number of donations and bequests contributed to the quick development of the Society which created a nucleus for the national network of 172 branches in England and Wales that exists today. These branches run a further 38 clinics and 33 animal centres. In 2005 RSPCA employed 323 uniformed inspectors and 146 animal collectors. In England and Wales RSPCA’s telephone advice line is called every 25 seconds. In 2005 the RSPCA saved 138,563 animals from danger and cruelty and rehomed 69,000 animals.

“Sadly, humans cannot always be trusted to do the best for animals without the force of the law...” The RSPCA’s vision is to work for a world in which all humans respect and live in harmony with all other members of the animal kingdom. The RSPCA, as a charity organization, will, by all lawful means, prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate the suffering of animals.

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Exercise

Choose the correct answers to the following questions:

1. Who was Richard Martin?

- a) a scientist b) a politician c) a teacher

2. How many people, including Richard Martin, founded the first animal protection society in London?

- a) 22 b) 23 c) 21

3. What was the aim of the first animal protection campaigns?

- a) To put an Animal Protection Act through parliament.
b) To collect donations.
c) To change people’s indifference to cruelty against animals.

4. Who gave permission to the SPCA to be called Royal Society?

- a) William IV
b) Edward VII
c) Queen Victoria

5. Where does RSPCA operate its large network of branches, clinics and animal centres?

- a) in England and Wales
b) in the United Kingdom
c) in England, Scotland and Wales.

6. Who saves animals from danger and cruelty?

- a) volunteers b) RSPCA’s managers c) uniformed inspectors and animal collectors employed by RSPCA.

II. The world's largest international animal protection organization: World Society for the Protection of Animals – WSPA (pronounced “vizspa”) (www.wspa-international.org)

WSPA, the world's largest network for animal welfare, brings together over 850 member societies in 150 countries. It was created in 1981 by merging the World Federation for the Protection of Animals (WFPA, founded in 1953) and the International Society for the Protection of Animals (ISPA, founded in 1959).

WSPA's work is focused on four priority animal welfare issues:

- **companion animals** – responsible ownership, humane stray animal management and the prevention of cruelty;
- **commercial exploitation of wildlife** – intensive farming, cruel management and killing of wild animals for food or products;
- **disaster relief for animals** – providing relief to animals in distress from man-made or natural disasters;
- **farm animals** – intensive farming, long distance transportation, inhumane slaughter of domestic animals for food.

A key area of WSPA's work has been the introduction of animal welfare principles into regions where they were previously under-developed or non-existent.

WSPA believes that animals have biologically determined instincts, interests and natures, and can experience pain and suffering. Each animal has intrinsic value and it is the responsibility of humans to ensure that the welfare of animals is respected and protected. Animals should live their lives free from avoidable suffering at the hands of humans, rather than be used inhumanely as “raw materials” for the benefit of mankind.

WSPA insists that all animals owned by or under the control of humans, should be kept in conditions appropriate to the needs of the species. ***Where the physiological and behavioural needs of a species cannot be met, the animals should not be kept.***

Animal welfare is defined by both the physical and psychological state of an animal and the conditions in which it lives. The welfare can be described as good if the individual animal is fit, healthy and free from suffering.

WSPA assesses the welfare of animals using the Five Freedoms:

- *freedom from hunger and thirst*
- *freedom from discomfort*
- *freedom from pain, injury and disease*
- *freedom from fear and distress*
- *freedom to express normal behaviour.*

A few of the most important results and projects of WSPA's first 25 years:

- Eradication of bear dancing in Greece and Turkey.
- Barcelona declared itself as “anti-bullfight”.
- From Sri Lanka to Afghanistan and Pakistan to The Caribbean, hundreds of thousands of animals have been rescued and treated in disaster relief efforts all over the world.
- First ever animal welfare legislation introduced in Taiwan.
- Bear sanctuaries funded and built in India, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey, Greece, USA, and Hungary (near Veresegyháza).
- Mobile veterinary clinics delivered to member organizations in Africa, Europe, South America, The Caribbean and Asia.
- “Pet Respect” programmes launched in over 40 countries worldwide to improve the welfare of stray and pet animals.
- Vietnamese Government agreement to phase out bear farming.
- Great ape sanctuaries funded in Sierra Leone, The Congo and Spain.
- Ban of commercial whale hunting.

WSPA has 13 offices worldwide and over 400,000 individual supporters. It is represented on numerous international bodies and is the only animal welfare organization to have consultative status at both the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

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Exercise

As a journalist, you have the opportunity to make an interview with one of the managers of WSPA. Prepare at least 10 questions relating to the policy and activities of WSPA, which you would like to put him/her during the interview.

III. The oldest and largest Hungarian animal welfare organization: HEROSZ – “Otto Herman” Hungarian Nationwide Association for the Protection of Animals and Nature (Herman Ottó Magyar Országos Állat- és Természetvédő Egyesület, www.herosz.hu)

The first animal protection association in Hungary was founded in 1882 by Otto Herman (1835-1914), the great scientist who is also deemed to be the last Hungarian polyhistor of the 19th and 20th centuries, and his friends Pál Királyi and Ferenc Fenyvessy. It successfully worked as a union of several associations operating in the Hungarian capital and the countryside until the beginning of the 2nd World War when its activities ceased. In 1967 Tamás Klement, a lawyer (with the support of Countess Katinka Andrassy, widow of Mihály Károlyi, and other humanists), re-organised the association as the legal successor of the first animal welfare society. Tamás Klement was the main office-holder in HEROSZ for 33 years (he died in 2001). At that time and for many subsequent years, HEROSZ was the only civic animal welfare association in Hungary.

HEROSZ has about 3,000 members, amongst them a huge number of pensioners, students and school children, and operates 12 branches in different parts of Hungary.

The work of HEROSZ is wide-ranging and includes the following main areas:

- **Operation of animal shelters** – HEROSZ operates 6 animal shelters in the cities of Budapest, Székesfehérvár, Zalaegerszeg, Szentés, Kiskunfélegyháza and Mohács. Besides the approximately 1,000 dogs which are cared for daily and given veterinary examination, these shelters also house other pets and animals like cats, ferrets, rabbits, hamsters, pigeons, etc. The main goal and task is to find new owners for the abandoned pets (i.e. to re-home them). These shelters are also the venues of numerous interesting events for adults and children. The shelters are financed from donations from private persons, commercial and industrial companies and foreign supporters; bequests; 1% of the personal income tax; subsidies from the National Civic Fund (NCA) and some local municipal councils. Every year about 10,000-12,000 people, including school children, visit the animal shelters which organise several open days and adoption days during the year.
- **Organisation of campaigns** – the local branches hold various animal protection campaigns on the World Day of Animals, the Day of Earth, the Day of Birds and Trees, etc.; the “Christmas of Animals” is also a favourite event of children.
- **Education of children and the youth** – this is the most important mission of HEROSZ which believes that the greatest attention must be paid to the future generation which is expected to show more respect, responsibility, sensitivity and kindness in connection with animals. So far, the efforts of HEROSZ and other animal welfare organizations regarding the inclusion of animal protection issues in the syllabus of primary and/or secondary schools have been without any success, but the relevant lobbying activities must be continued. Every summer animal protection camps are held in Székesfehérvár in which the children study the basic knowledge of animal welfare, and they also care for the animals living in the shelter. Various competitions – drawing, poetry reciting, etc. – are organized every year with the participation of lots of children from several schools. The volunteers from HEROSZ launched a so called “children section” and regularly hold lectures and various functions in schools. HEROSZ thinks that its educational activity must be enlarged and developed, and this material for people studying English is also a part of its program. All events organized by HEROSZ branches are open not only for children but also for the adults who are or will be rearing children or anybody who is willing to study animal welfare and become a responsible and loving owner and/or a friend of animals.
- **Consultancy on animal welfare issues** – the central office and all branches of HEROSZ are ready to give advice regarding animal protection issues and co-operate with local municipal councils and local or nationwide authorities in the solution of such problems.

HEROSZ is an associated member of RSPCA and WSPA. It co-operates with several other Hungarian animal welfare associations and attends and organizes relevant meetings and conferences.

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Exercise

James, your English pen friend, who is a volunteer of RSPCA, writes in his last letter that he would like to obtain some information about the Hungarian animal protection movement. He has found the website of HEROSZ but he cannot read it because it is written only in the Hungarian language. He asks you to send him a short description of the policy and activities of HEROSZ.

Write a letter of 120-150 words and include the following points:

- *short history of HEROSZ*
- *main fields of its activities*

- *animal shelters operated by HEROSZ*
- *education of children – the most important mission of HEROSZ.*