

19 August 2024

I, Elana Rolfe, UK passport number: 543483675, of 11 Avanti Road, Klein Dassenberg, have been volunteering in Animal Rescue in Cape Town for almost 10 years and am a member of the Cape Animal Welfare Forum (CAWF).

I have been visiting HAWK animal shelter since before Covid. I know Andre Verbiest does not believe in euthanasia and often, against veterinary advice, continues to treat severe medical cases with natural/ homemade remedies. Some dogs have recovered, most have not and have needed professional treatment or needed to be removed and euthanized.

On one occasion, in January 2023, when visiting the shelter I have seen a dead puppy in an enclosure with other puppies. I brought it to the attention of the volunteers and staff and they said they had been treating the puppy for parvovirus. This was hugely worrying as parvovirus is very contagious and the other puppies were also placed at risk.

On the same day, I saw a dead adult dog in one of the other enclosures. Again, upon bringing it to the attention of staff, I was told they were aware, and were waiting to bury the dog. This happened on a day when I took prospective adopters to the shelter. They were so horrified that they left traumatised. I do not know the cause of death of this dog.

On the same day, a friend with me was allowed to take a young dog home with her. At the time, we were not aware but this dog also had to be euthanised a week later due to distemper.

I reported the situation to the SPCA, and apparently they had gone in and removed a lot of dogs who had distemper.

Last week, I was made aware of the flooding in Riverlands and at the shelter. I paid for and arranged for 100 straw bales to be delivered. On Wednesday, 14 August, I was alerted to a fire at the shelter.

Upon arriving I saw 4 dogs who had perished in the fire. I found another 2 dogs who required urgent medical attention. Ronné Forsythe, one of the directors of HAWK took one home, I took the other.

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Both went to Malmesbury Dierehospitaal on Thursday 15 August. The first dog had a severe mouth and eye injury (Trixie). On site, I asked André if he had been treating the dog for the gaping mouth wound and he said, no, it must have happened during the fire. The vet however claims it is an old injury. The mouth has been treated and stitched, and has lost her eye. She was discharged. The second dog (Fire aka Rayne), is still at the vet, 5 days later for a severe ear and skin infection. Apparently this dog has been at the shelter for almost 7 years and did not have these medical conditions upon arrival. She had mild lung damage due to the fire but her stay at the hospital is because of conditions that André claims he was treating.

Today, 19 August, I visited the shelter with a team of volunteers to try and document the 260+ dogs. I removed 2 who had badly infected wounds, with maggots. They are currently at Malmesbury Dierehospitaal and known as #25 and #91. One more female (#51) had a gaping rotting abdominal wound which I handed to inspector Ayanda from GOGH SPCA.

There are four more dogs with cysts, open wounds, tumours who need urgent medical treatment. HAWK have refused to let us remove anymore dogs from the property. (#63 testicular cyst, undocumented dog with ear tumour -Andre told me the dogs has seen 3 separate vets who all recommended euthanasie-, 2 dogs in the clinic- one with severe bite wounds seemingly in extreme pain (member of the Riverlands community's dog at the shelter for medical treatment) and another with an unknown diagnosis.

There are an unknown number of cats in a separate room that Andre Verbiest told me are living with leukemia.

Of the 100 dogs we documented today, almost 80 require veterinary treatment for ear infections.

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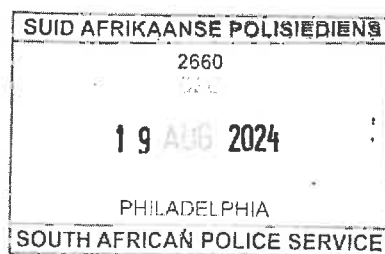
Ans

We spent 3 hours documenting, under much duress from staff and volunteers and the directors, and only managed to get through 100 dogs in one camp. There are at least 3 more camps.

In my opinion, the staff are not qualified to provide necessary basic or medical care. Some dogs are living in extremely cramped cages, most in a dirty and unhygienic environment. In the large camps with up to 100 dogs roaming free, some dogs live on top of wendy house roofs or on top of wooden kennels out of fear of the 60-80 dogs who claim the "ground" level in a camp.

The dogs are fed a diet of raw carcass meat, which is often left to rot as the dogs take the carcass pieces into their kennels. Sometimes they are fed pellets and tinned food. The bones are burned and used as "sawdust" in the enclosures where unsocialized dogs are housed individually. When you approach the shelter, the stench of rotting meat, burnt bones, dog faeces, infection and unwashed dirty dogs is overpowering.

There is no record keeping. They do not know how many dogs they have on the property and most dogs do not have name/IDs so they are unable to record vaccinations or medical treatment/medication.



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