



## Media Release

# Animal protection groups dismayed over passage of loophole-ridden bill

MPs' vote seen as a vote for animal cruelty, say groups

**(Ottawa, Thursday April 10<sup>th</sup> 2008)** – The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) today expressed disappointment that Parliament passed Bill S-203, a bill they say does nothing to stop animal cruelty. The bill is opposed by the vast majority of Canadians and every animal protection group in the country.

"Humane societies and SPCAs across Canada are shocked and dismayed that Parliament has ignored our calls for strong and effective animal cruelty legislation. It is extremely disappointing that almost ten years of debate have only produced this, a bill that will still allow the vast majority of animal abusers to escape punishment," said Shelagh MacDonald of CFHS, representing SPCAs and humane societies across the country. "Our agents and inspectors will continue to be handcuffed by inadequate legislation that does nothing to improve protection for animals from cruelty and abuse."

While the groups welcome increased penalties for animal cruelty crimes, they maintain this bill will only apply to less than 1% of animal abusers as that is how many can be successfully convicted under the Criminal Code today. Bill S-203 continues to make it nearly impossible to punish crimes of neglect and does not criminalize the breeding and training of animals to fight each other.

"MPs are out of date, out of step and out of touch with the expectations of Canadians today," stated IFAW campaigner Kim Elmslie. "Canada is falling behind countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines and the Ukraine in protecting our animals from cruelty." More than 130,000 Canadians signed petitions specifically opposing Bill S-203. A 2006 poll found 85% of Canadians want modern and effective legislation that makes it easier for law enforcement agencies to prosecute those who commit criminal acts of animal cruelty.

Stated Pat Tohill, WSPA Programs Manager: "During the debate, many MPs argued that S-203 was only a first step. Many said they would support MP Mark Holland's Bill C-373. Most said they would support further amendments to Canada's animal cruelty laws. We will be holding MPs to their commitment to support further amendments to Canada's cruelty laws. Canadians will not wait another century before animals are protected from heinous acts of cruelty in Canada."

A more comprehensive animal cruelty bill has been passed by Canada's House of Commons twice in the past ten years, receiving the support of all political parties only to die in the Senate. The CFHS, IFAW and WSPA plan to continue their fight for long-overdue and reasonable amendments to Canada's Victorian-era animal cruelty law. Canadians expect nothing less.

Canadians can find out how their MP voted by visiting [www.dontbecruel.org](http://www.dontbecruel.org).



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