

## PETA STATEMENT AT NEWS CONFERENCE REGARDING EUTHANASIA

June 17, 2005

Daphna Nachminovitch:

Since the news from North Carolina, we have received countless enquiries. The two most pressing are "why is PETA in North Carolina?" and "why do you euthanize animals?" We would like the opportunity to answer these two questions. We will take your additional questions at the end. First, let me explain why we started going to North Carolina.

My name is Daphna Nachminovitch, and I oversee PETA's Domestic Animal and Wildlife Department, including our Community Animal Project and our spay clinic, SNIP.

Let me give you some background as to how and why we started working in North Carolina. In 2000, PETA was contacted by a police officer who was distressed by conditions in the county pound. We were given photographs which showed one dog drowning in a pool of water, too sick and weak to lift her head, a starving dog eating a dead kitten, and a dead puppy found in the gas chamber shed.

PETA then visited the Bertie County Animal Shelter to

see things firsthand. We found sick, injured animals in need of veterinary care, a leaky windowless gas box in which animals were placed to be killed, and facility that had no electricity and no covering for its cages. PETA immediately offered aid to Bertie County and to the City of Windsor, which operates its own facility within the county limits. There, animals were restrained on a metal pole and shot with a .22. Shortly after this, we found out that Hertford County's homeless animals were also gassed. We made arrangements to pay a local veterinarian to euthanize those animals by painless injection. PETA to this date subsidizes humane euthanasia at the Hertford facility, and has so far paid nearly \$9,000 for this service.

Our trips to Northampton County began after it was discovered that a local veterinarian was illegally killing animals with injections of a paralytic, succinylcholine chloride, which causes respiratory arrest before loss of consciousness, leaving animals to suffer horrific deaths by suffocation while their organs freeze up.

PETA has spent well over a quarter of a million dollars to improve the facilities, build and deliver doghouses for animals left outside with nothing but a metal barrel or not even so much as a tree in all weather. Even when we try sometimes, we still can't prevent suffering. This poor dog-despite our efforts-was retied in such a way that he could not reach the shade we had provided him by delivering a doghouse. He baked to death in the hot sun, just 2

weeks ago. We also spay and neuter animals as well as provide other medical care, apply flea and tick preventative to chained dogs who become so infested that they open sores on their bodies from scratching, give away straw and tie-outs, send animal control officers for training, hire staff to clean the shelters, purchase supplies for the shelter, and even build from the ground up a brand new cat housing barn in Bertie County. We have only ever helped and alleviated cruelty and suffering.

I would like to show you these photographs.

Please take a look at the albums we have placed on the tables.

I will now turn this over to PETA's president, Ingrid Newkirk:

Ingrid Newkirk:

Now let me explain why PETA believes euthanasia is the kindest gift to a dog or cat unwanted and unloved. Please also try to put yourself in the place of those of us at PETA who care deeply for animals yet who have to hold the animals in our arms and take their lives because there is nowhere for them to go. The fact is that we cannot stop euthanasia until people stop letting dogs and cats bring new litters into the world. For every litter born,

1,000 more animals will end up being destroyed as those litters grow up and start having litters themselves within six months. The numbers of unwanted animals are pretty impossible for the average person to imagine. If you have not worked in an open-admission shelter - one which does not set a limit on the number of animals it will accept and then turn away the others - you would be shocked. North Carolina shelters kill 35 animals annually for every 1,000 residents, and, as you have heard, most do not die a humane death.

Someone asked could we not bring the animals from NC to Virginia to be placed? Well, Virginia already faces its own problem of large numbers of animals who can't find homes. We have actively lobbied for increased license fees for unsterilized animals, we were instrumental in getting Norfolk to pass a regulation requiring the animal shelter to pre-sterilize animals before adoption, and we run a spay clinic seven days a week to try to help. Citizens who are up in arms about the need for euthanasia should join us in being up in arms about stopping the flow of unwanted animals.

We were asked, could we not advertise for homes for them? The open admission shelters advertise every day for the animals they have, yet every day they must euthanise, they have no choice, because not enough people come to offer good homes to the ones already there and more animals are coming through the door.

Could we not turn the animals loose on the street? No, they would come to a bad end in traffic or by starving or they would simply end up in a shelter again.

Could we not run a refuge for them ourselves? Well, we could warehouse them and fill this building in a month, easily. There isn't the space, the money or the staff to do that properly for even one month's worth of unwanted animals, and what would we do the month after that and the month after that?

That is why we try to prevent current and future suffering by doing two things:

1) we work at the roots, trying to stem the flow of unwanteds so that there will be fewer to euthanise. We do that by education, by advocacy, through pushy ads, by running a mobile sterilization clinic that has spayed thousands of animals in this area alone in the last few years.

And 2) we give the unwanted animals a painless exit from an uncaring world. We will not shy away from doing society's dirty work as long as the alternative is a life of misery and a bad death. And that is the alternative. As you have heard Ms. Nachminovitch say, in North Carolina, in these impoverished counties, the alternative has been slow death or bad death. Animals have frozen to death in the pounds there for lack of heat in winter; they have drowned

there during floods, they used to be shot in the head with a .22 (and I ask you to imagine one man out there trying to hold the dog with one hand and shoot accurately with the other), and they were gassed to death in a windowless, metal box, struggling to get out. We would not be doing our job if we didn't stop those things.

There is no magic wand that will stop euthanasia, but each of us who has been upset by realizing that it happens, can look into our soul and honestly ask ourselves: "What am I doing to stop the overpopulation crisis for dogs and cats? To stop the killing."

If the answer is just feeling bad about it or complaining, that is no help at all. To fix the flow people must stop breeding, casually acquiring, and then dumping animals. We did not create the problem, but we try hard to fix it every single day. We also, from the very beginning, have begged North Carolina counties to allow us to help them establish on-site adoption programs and we can only hope that the current level of interest, after all these years, may allow that to happen at last.

Finally, let me say how PETA euthanises, and you are welcome to watch us do that, by appointment under conditions that you will not disturb the animal. PETA uses a barbiturate, sodium pentobarbital, to deliver one injection into the dog or cat's leg. The animal is held lovingly and petted and talked to as the

solution enters the vein. For many of these animals, that is the only loving touch they have ever felt. Unconsciousness occurs in a matter of two or three seconds and occurs without trauma, without pain, and without the animal knowing.

PETA has never made a secret of the fact that most of the animals picked up in North Carolina are euthanized. We want attention for euthanasia but no one is usually interested in this depressing story.

Now we hope that the counties of North Carolina will still not only welcome our services - for it would be a terrible step back if all that is focused on is the matter of the bodies put in the dumpsters. That conduct disgusts us, violates PETA protocol, happened without our knowledge and can never be allowed to happen again, but our work must go on.

Thank you. We will now take your questions.