

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To David Ramsay

To the editor:

The following is an open letter to Ontario Minister of Natural Resources David Ramsay:

For a number of years we have been growing vegetables and fruits, which we sell at the Thunder Bay Farmers Market. Our farm has sand dunes on it, which we have been leveling off each year. With a letter of intent for the Township of Oliver-Paipoonge, we sell the sand to a person who in turn spreads the topsoil back on to the leveled field, with his own equipment. We are living in a depressed area of the province and this person provides work for his truck drivers.

I attended a meeting in Thunder Bay on April 12 that was arranged by the Ministry of Natural Resources, regarding the licensing of our pit under the Aggregate Resources Act. They are giving us 10 weeks notice to obtain from them a \$200 permit. We also have to pay an additional 11 cents a tonne to the MNR. As well, we are expected to draft a plan of our so-called pit. The cost of hiring a professional engineer to do so would be at least \$3,000. Another requirement is a fence around the pit, which would be another hefty cost.

We cannot afford the cost that is being forced back upon us. With all the rules and regulations, 1,000 farmers are leaving the farming industry each year in Ontario and we

feel victimized.

We hope that you will be able to ward off this action of the MNR and let us keep farming in a reasonable, monetary way. Let us continue to serve the people of Thunder Bay at our farmers markets.

Let us have the right to the stewardship of our land.

*Robert Barrie
Thunder Bay*

Dogs low priority

To the editor:

Death is merciful for the thousands and thousands of northern dogs born each year across Canada. Life is starvation, lonely and cruel with dog-on-dog aggression and on many occasions, outright abuse. Death is merciful for these dogs. Dog shoots are the only method currently available to many small towns and northern reserves.

Throughout history culling has been "acceptable" to control animal populations has it not? Elephants, bears?? The list goes on. So what about hanging? Is this OK too? What about slowly starving to death? Technically no one's hands get dirty.

Ignorance is bliss. Ask Grand Chief Stan Beardy. Ask government policy makers. Ask Lt. Gov. James Bartleman, who refuses to respond to my requests to at least acknowledge and possibly endorse the need to address this problem on a national level.

On the other hand, let's ask the front

line teachers and nurses that work in many of these remote locations and are traumatized by witnessing the starvation and abuse. Let's ask the locals what they feel. Heaven forbid, let's ask people like me that rescue these animals.

How about this: I had to have a six week old pup that was rescued from up north put down the day after it arrived. Its legs were crippled and deformed and it was disembowelled. Yes, you heard right. Its bowels were hanging out. Abuse? Inbreeding? Who knows. Oh, it smiled and licked me on the way to the vet.

Lance Ribbonlet of the North Tailerree reserve in northern Alberta, dead at 5 years of age by dog attack.

In northern communities where there have been military evacuations because of flooding or mold, army planes going in empty, refuse to take dog food up, leaving the communities' animals to starve, not even acknowledging the existence of the problem.

Lack of access and skyrocketing costs plague many northern communities across Canada. I know that in the grand scheme of things animal welfare is low on the totem pole.

People first. But we can not spend the next century pretending that this problem does not exist. The suffering of Canada's dogs and cats and the potential dangers that they pose on various levels of a community, particularly our youth, necessitate a coordinated action that can only improve the overall mental and physical health of community members.

Study after study has shown the psychological affects of exposure to neglect/abuse of animals as perpetuating the cycle of despair, hopelessness and violence, which thrives in environments of social stress and isolation. With the high suicide rates of youth on reserves, this is yet one more emotional contributing factor that is within our power to address.

We need a government strategy that can establish priorities and targets with community based groups, a strategy that will be sustainable over time.

On the upside, the World Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is organizing the first ever 2007 Northern Dog Conference in the fall, as a starting point for finding solutions. Lets see if any of the various levels of government that are going to be invited attend.

Also, as the northern dog lady, I have rescued/relocated more than 400 dogs in the past four years. My goal has been to facilitate access to spay/neuter programs on northern Ontario reserves.

The Canadian Animal Assistance Team heard about my rescue work and contacted me as they would like to start up an Ontario branch, and work together on offering their first remote spay/neuter/immunization program on a fly in reserve.

I hope that a foundation can be laid for future initiatives on other reserves that wish to participate, eventually with governmental funding.

*Karen Bester,
Thunder Bay*