

Thank you, Andrew Ntambwe

Joycelyn Hallot of Windermere Centre Management wrote to the editor of *Berea News* to report a caring action on the part of Andrew Mtambwe, who is a Windermere Centre car guard.

Andrew found a large bag of dog food left in a trolley. Any 'lost and found' items are handed over to the Centre's central management for safe keeping in the hope that they will be claimed by the owners.

If this does not occur, and the Centre is unable to trace the owners, the items are handed over to the finder. No owner could be traced, so the packet of dog food was in due course given to Andrew.

He does not have an animal himself, but he knew that food is constantly needed for the stream of animals for which the SPCA becomes responsible, and he chose to add the biscuits to the SPCA trolley at Checkers, Windermere.

Thank you for your kind and caring action, Andrew. We salute you.

Halt, Mum and babies crossing!

We applaud the Johannesburg Metro police officer who closed the busy N1 South freeway at Beyers Naude Drive for a couple of minutes a few months ago to allow a mother goose and her six goslings to cross the freeway safely.

It was shortly before 8 a.m., so the traffic was heavy. The officer saw the mother and her babies trying to cross from the centre of the freeway and took immediate action. The little family was transported to a place of safety by the SPCA.

Summer Glades, opposite our Botanical Gardens, is home to many Egyptian geese that are attracted by the ponds and safety of the beautifully designed gardens in front of these apartments which overlook Grayville racecourse and the luscious fairways of the Royal Durban Golf Club. Parent Egyptian geese and their goslings frequently cross busy Sydenham Road from Summer Glades to visit the Botanical Gardens, leaving onlookers with their hearts in their mouths.

Egyptian geese are regarded by golf course managements throughout the country as visitors they could happily do without, because removal of their faeces from the fairways is a costly ongoing exercise.

These birds are not an introduced species, as many think, but are indigenous to Africa south of the Sahara. In South Africa, they are especially prolific in the Western Cape. The Egyptian goose is not really a goose at all, but a Sheldrake, which is a species between a goose and a duck. It is the most widespread of Africa wildfowl.

Sheldrakes were domesticated by the ancient Egyptians, who regarded them as sacred. They are excellent parents and, like swans, are believed to mate for life.

More people are caring about the cruelty of factory farming

The SPCA makes no bones about the fact that we are totally against battery chicken production. In terms of the need to reduce fast-food intake, McDonald's probably gets

relatively little praise, but it has taken a significant step in the battery chickens issue and deserves due recognition for that.

America and Canada's 16,000 McDonald's restaurants will serve eggs only from cage-free chickens within ten years. That seems an awfully long time, but they are actually already well on their way to moving out of associations with battery chicken factory farming. Since 2011, they have been buying over 13 million eggs annually from cage-free birds. They have also announced a two-year plan to phase out chickens fed antibiotics "used to fight human infections". (Does that mean that other antibiotics will still be acceptable?)

McDonald's in America uses some two billion eggs annually, with 120 million being used in their Canadian restaurants. Several other major companies, including Starbucks and Nestle, are committing themselves to using eggs only from birds not confined to battery cages. Burger King has reported that they will be using only cage-free eggs by 2017.

The point we should note is that an increasing number of North American companies are sourcing their poultry supplies from suppliers who are using more humane breeding practices. In 2008, a law was passed in California mandating that all eggs sold in the state should come from chickens given more spacious living quarters than the appalling A4-sized battery cage. It is not clear from the report exactly what is meant by "more spacious living quarters", which lacks definition, but it is at least a step in the right direction and has led to similar laws being passed in several other states.

We recently reported on the planned phasing out of sow crates in our own country, with the deadline some years ahead. The use of sow crates is a callous practice, and the NSPCA has made it known that it regards the length of the delay as unacceptable. Thanks to the lobbying of groups like the Humane Society of the United States, Mercy for Animals, and World Animal Protection, almost a hundred leading companies in North America have committed to the phasing out of sow crates.

Don't be complicit. Speak out against battery chicken 'farming' and the use of sow crates. While free-range eggs are often more expensive, there are suppliers that offer them at reasonable prices. I buy from two suppliers who price their free-range eggs very competitively. If we don't bring about change by our personal buying practices, then who will?

Baby ostriches maimed for fashion

In January 2010, inspections were carried out at several ostrich hatcheries in Oudtshoorn. It was found that it was common practice to clip the toenails of ostrich chicks... but that this was not generally being performed humanely. Pathological analysis on sample nails showed that toes were being amputated.

A criminal case was opened the following month, but was withdrawn by the Western Cape Director of Public Prosecutions after the Western Cape Ostrich Producers Association indicated by letter to the director that toe amputations would not recur and that regular checks would ensure this.

The industry has been under some pressure owing to having to recover from an outbreak of Avian influenza during which many farms were placed under quarantine. Senior NSPCA Inspector Grace de Lange said that the society respects and adheres to

“biosecurity protocols, especially when there are disease outbreaks”, but that the process of this criminal case was nonetheless carefully followed up with the judiciary.

An NSPCA representative met with the CEO of the SA Ostrich Business Chamber in January this year to discuss the practice of toe clipping and to inspect several hatcheries. Mr Kleyn, the CEO, felt sure that no amputations were taking place. No samples had been sent for analysis by the industry, although this is prescribed by their own code of conduct.

When the NSPCA again obtained toe nail samples from ostrich checks last January and submitted them for pathological analysis, the 2010 findings were re-confirmed. In March, a warning letter went to the Ostrich Business Chamber advising them of the continuing inhumanity and demanding that this cruel practice should immediately cease. They were notified that criminal charges for animal cruelty would be re-instituted.

According to the industry, it is necessary to clip nails in order to prevent scratching of the leather of other birds, as this would result in lack of quality. The crucial issue remains the consequent amputation of the toes of baby ostriches while clipping the nails. This cruel action contravenes the Animals Protection Act 71 of 1962 and also the Code of Conduct for the Commercial Production of Ostrich South Africa (2011). The latter would appear to confirm that amputation of toes can be avoided. In terms of the law, it **has** to be avoided. Another huge black cross against bad farming practices.

The unequivocal message from the NSPCA is this: *“We urge all caring consumers and retailers to assist in ensuring that a strong message is sent to the Ostrich Business Chamber and farmers that this cruel practice must stop.”*

The role of ordinary citizen

Members of the public are not always aware of the wide-ranging responsibilities of the SPCA movement and the extent to which public disapproval can be effective. What is essential is the alertness of the ordinary citizen and the will to reduce the level of cruelty in our country by reporting all observed instances to the nearest SPCA.

It has become a truism that the moral integrity of a country can be judged by the way it treats its animals, but truisms arise in the first place only because they are so obviously undeniable. Thank you to our caring volunteers and to all the generous-minded people who support our efforts to protect animals wherever possible.