

Animal neglect a growing problem

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Malnourished puppies tied up with no shelter to escape the scorching sun. Cats left to starve in vacated apartments. Dogs kicked and beaten with two-by-fours.

Welcome to the grim world of the Flin Flon area's neglected and abused pets, a world that has been growing to include more and more innocent animals.

"There are some people who don't believe it's happening as much as it is," says Debbie Hiebert, president of the Flin Flon, Creighton and Area SPCA. "They never see it, so they can't imagine it happening here in Flin Flon."

Hiebert says the most common form of

abuse is neglect. The least serious neglect involves pets with enough food and water but not nearly enough – if any – exercise or people interaction.

On the other end of the scale are the worst instances, including lack of food or water, no shelter and leashes so short a dog can't escape an onslaught of hungry mosquitoes.

"In some cases it's ignorance," says Hiebert. "They (the owners) just have no knowledge of the basic needs of their dogs. And a lot of it is just a lack of interest. People get these cute little puppies and they start off with really good intentions. They probably start off playing with and walking their new puppy. It gets big and it's not so

cute anymore, and they lose interest."

The SPCA president has been receiving about a dozen calls a month from concerned residents reporting some form of neglect.

That's on top of the one or two calls per month reporting outright physical abuse.

"Often I get multiple phone calls," notes Hiebert. "Maybe one neighbour will call me and then a week later another one will call. When that happens I can be pretty darn sure that the first call was legitimate.

"It's frustrating, and maddening as well."

So much so that she has turned to the RCMP, often armed with written statements signed by witnesses.

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

A stray cat at the Creighton landfill last year.