

Official Statement from Gozo SPCA

17th February 2010

Gozo SPCA reports that the Centre Manager, Mrs Betty Berry, is resigning and that they will no longer be taking in dogs. Last week a puppy was seriously attacked by an older terrier dog, whilst both were in the care of Gozo SPCA. Despite prompt veterinary attention and subsequent nursing, the puppy sadly died from its wounds. Centre Manager Betty Berry is distraught over this death, which should never have happened since it was a direct result of the cramped and unsuitable premises that the Gozo SPCA has struggled to work in for over thirty years. Because Gozo is a tiny island, any land that is suitable for a new purpose built centre is all owned by the government. For over 20 years, Gozo SPCA has been in constant negotiations with the various officials of the Gozo Ministry with a view to renting such a plot of land. It is well known that the cost of building the new centre will be met from funds that the SPCA already have. During these negotiations a number of suitable sites have been proposed by the SPCA, but sadly, despite many words of encouragement and promises of help, nothing has ever transpired.

Mrs Berry also sits on the Animal Welfare Council which is drafting the new animal welfare legislation. Within this legislation there are very specific requirements for the construction of animal shelters, none of which are met by the current SPCA premises. One of the many reasons for this legislation is to minimise the possibility of such horrific events occurring. In recognition of this risk Gozo SPCA took steps last year to strictly limit the number of dogs in their care, hoping that this would relieve the situation. The SPCA and the volunteer helpers are so shocked by this current tragedy that they will no longer subject dogs to such unsuitable conditions. Since Gozo SPCA has no alternative premises, nor do they kill healthy animals, then the consequence is that with immediate effect they will cease to rescue and house further stray dogs. The emergency animal ambulance service for dogs will also have to cease. Last year the Gozo SPCA picked up 356 stray and abandoned animals, so this has not been an easy decision to make. There are many horrific stories attached to that statistic and Mrs Berry can no longer personally deal with the added anguish and sorrow that could easily be avoided, so she will be stepping down as the Centre Manager. Meanwhile the Gozo SPCA will be reviewing its effectiveness and viability over the coming months.

The Gozo SPCA regrets the inconvenience to the community and directs them to the Police, the local Vet, the Animal Welfare Authority or the Ministry for Gozo with any dog related emergencies.