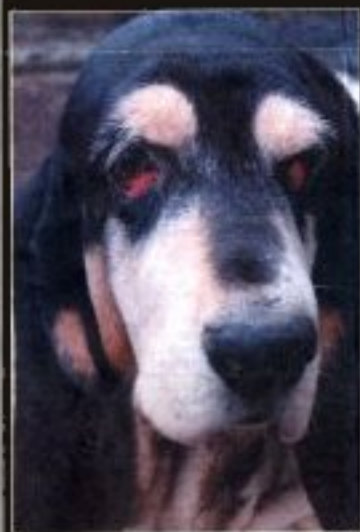


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Anger, bewilderment and sorrow as abandoned dogs are killed at Suffolk sanctuary

# RSPCA SHOOTS BASSET HOUNDS



## EXCLUSIVE

- Fury after revelations of how dumped pets died in Ipswich
- Charity investigates case – staff exonerated
- Experts say animals should have been put to sleep by injection
- Upset couple resign posts in protest

## FULL INVESTIGATION

Pages 2 and 3



ELBORN END: The two basset hounds who were controversially shot



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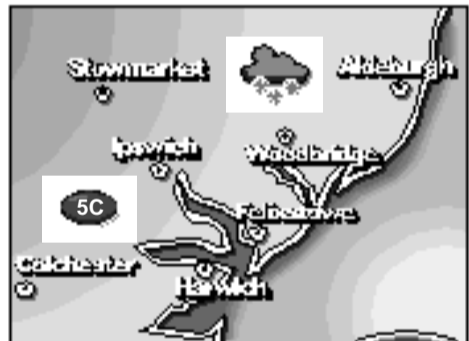
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Take care on the roads tomorrow

## Star Weather



#### Local Forecast

Tonight: more sleet and snow showers. Tomorrow: a cold day in biting winds. Icy start with hail, sleet or snow later. Max temp: 2-5C (36-41F).

#### Regional Outlook

Friday: another cold day with wintry showers. Saturday: much the same but with some good spells of sunshine.

#### World Weather

Amsterdam	06	rain
Barbados	29	p cloudy
Cairo	27	clear
Dublin	07	rain
Jo'burg	20	rain
Mexico City	23	clear
Moscow	-1	snow
New Delhi	28	clear
New York	04	snow
Prague	00	snow
Sydney	21	cloudy

#### UK Yesterday

Worst	Falmouth, Cornwall	10C 50F
Coldest	Swanage, Dorset	-3C 27F
Wettest	Lerwick, Shetland	0.39 in
Sunniest	Torquay, Devon	6.4 hrs

WeatherCall 09068 232731

# Tragic end to

## Uproar over the shooting of pets

**EXCLUSIVE**

By SARAH GILLETT

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TWO basset hounds abandoned on an Ipswich pavement were later taken away and shot by the RSPCA. The Evening Star can reveal today.

The dogs' tragic end so horrified one volunteer RSPCA couple that they resigned in protest.

And the decision to shoot the animals led to an RSPCA internal inquiry after a complaint was made.

Today, a spokesman for the national Basset Hound Club said his organisation would have taken the animals into care, whatever their physical state. If any of this popular breed of dog ever need putting down it should be done by lethal injection, he said.

Last August, the Star reported on the plight of the neglected dogs that had been dumped outside the Macmarket shop in Lindbergh Road, Ipswich.

Covered in sores and with overgrown claws, the dogs were taken in by the RSPCA.

But four days later they were put down – a story reported in The Star in September.

Now, it has emerged the dogs were shot in the back of the head.

The details emerged after the Star was contacted by Avril and Robert Mickleburgh. The couple, who used to run the RSPCA clinic in St George's Street, were so disgusted to learn of the dogs' fate they resigned from the charity.

Mrs Mickleburgh said: "My husband and I worked for the RSPCA for 11 years. He was a member of the committee and we were quite good friends with the inspectors.

"On this particular occasion an inspector came in to the clinic and I asked him about the basset hounds.

"He said they'd been put to sleep and made it clear they had been shot. I honestly thought he was pulling my leg.

"In all the years we've had dogs and other animals put to sleep at the clinic not once have we had to use a firearm. We resigned very reluctantly. We miss it dreadfully, but we felt that the public should be aware of what was going on.

"We could not support a charity that uses a firearm on domestic animals.

"Sometimes you can't raise a vein in the back of an animal's leg but you can use other parts of the body. A vet could have been called. What was the rush?"

Mr Mickleburgh said: "In my opinion there was no need for dogs to be treated in this way. Just a little bit of



DISGUSTED: Avril and Robert Mickleburgh who resigned from the charity, upset that the dogs were shot.

Picture: RICHARD SNASDELL



REAL SHAME: Mayuri Patel, outside whose shop the dogs were abandoned

TLC and someone to comfort them as they passed away would have been a lot better than the cold barrel of a gun."

The RSPCA today said the dogs had been shot separately and neither saw the other killed.

Tim Wass, RSPCA superintendent for the Midlands and East Anglia, said: "The RSPCA has a necessary duty to prevent suffering and in some cases, this very reluctantly necessitates euthanasia. The dogs in question were going to be euthanased by the owner anyway and the RSPCA became involved only when these plans were frustrated and the dogs abandoned.

"In the end the dogs were signed over to the RSPCA on the condition that they were put to sleep and it was our view that the best way of doing this was by shooting them because it was difficult or distressing for the dogs to administer a fatal injection.

"Each case is assessed on its individual merit, and the most humane option – from the animal's perspective – is

## 'We could not support a charity that uses a firearm on domestic animals'

— Avril Mickleburgh

selected, as was the case in this instance."

He confirmed the RSPCA had carried out an inquiry into the incident after receiving a complaint: "Whenever we get a complaint we immediately launch an inquiry, particularly where there are firearms involved. It goes right to the top of the organisation and, in this case the inspector involved was completely vindicated."

Ipswich vet Guy Lown, a partner at the Highcliffe Veterinary Practice in Cliff Lane, Ipswich, said certain basset hounds were notoriously difficult to put down with a needle.

He said: "Because they have got short legs they have got a lot of spare skin and often their legs are angular. They are not straight and are quite odd shaped legs.

"It could be very far from being straightforward. For a lot of types of animals shooting is by far the most humane way of doing things.

"If animals are very stressed it can

be very difficult to do anything by injection."

Mr Lown added that if a basset was old or had high blood pressure, these factors again would mean it would be extremely difficult to humanely put them to sleep using a needle.

He said as he was unaware of the health of the two bassets. He was not able to speak with authority about the reasons behind their shooting.

Alistair Gibson, public relations officer for the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, said: "The BSAVA believes that euthanasia is best performed by injection of an overdose of a barbiturate solution, under the direction of a veterinary surgeon. We would not recommend other methods, except in emergency situations.

"However, it may be that there were extenuating circumstances in this particular case that we are unaware of."

Tina Watkins, treasurer of the Basset Hound Club of Wales, said she had never heard of a case where a basset hound had to be shot and she was horrified by it. She said a lethal injection could be placed into a basset's ear, or under the dog's tongue.

"I have never, ever, heard of basset hounds being destroyed in this way. I had one of mine put to sleep by injection recently. There wasn't a problem.

"I have spoken to two friends, both long-term basset owners of 35 years plus and neither have heard of 'skin being too thick'."

Mayuri Patel, owner of the Macmarket shop, outside which the dogs were left, said the method of their demise was a "real shame".

She added: "I can understand that, if the dogs were in pain, they had to put them out of their misery, but there must have been another way to do it."

## Death of dogs was so unnecessary – animal welfare boss

WE could have found them a home. That's the overwhelming message today from charities and organisations involved in the welfare of basset hounds.

The revelation of the manner of the dogs' death has sent shock-waves through the dog-loving community.

Michael Errey is chairman of the National Basset Hound Club and a trustee of Basset Hound Welfare – a

registered charity specialising in the welfare of the breed.

He said: "The whole point about it is it's such a shame. We spend a lot of time finding homes for bassets, no matter how old they are. We've got people all over the country who we match dogs up with to provide suitable homes. Why didn't they do this?"

"I've never heard of a pet basset hound being euthanased in this man-

ner. It's a job to know without all the facts but one would think they could have just given them a tranquiliser and then they've got all the time in the world to find a vein."

Marion Brown is the national breed rescue's basset hound representative for East Anglia. It is her job to co-ordinate and find homes for unwanted bassets in this area and she is usually kept informed by the RSPCA.

But she knew nothing about these particular dogs and was devastated to learn of their fate: "Normally if the RSPCA have unwanted bassets in their care, they contact us. Had we known about them we would have taken them in. I have lists of people in the region waiting to re-home basset hounds.

"Something must have gone badly wrong. I certainly do not agree with the RSPCA shooting them," she said.

# tale of two bassets



## FAST facts: Basset hounds



**CHUMS:** Clement Freud who helped make bassets popular when he appeared alongside Henry the hound in TV commercials during early seventies

■ They have a placid and affectionate temperament and are neither timid nor aggressive.

■ A very popular family dog.

■ They have a deep loud bark which might suggest they are unfriendly when they are not.

■ They originated in France in the 15th century. They were bred as hunters with a good persistent nose and dwarfed to make them slower and more manageable on foot.

■ Basset comes from the French word 'bas' meaning 'low'.

■ There is a problem with puppy farmers breeding untypical hounds with bad temperaments and selling them to unsuitable homes.

**ABANDONED:** The two bassets that were shot sparking a storm of outrage that they were not given lethal injections, instead, to end their lives.

Picture: SIMON PARKER

## The RSPCA in its own words

THE RSPCA was set up in 1824 to promote kindness and prevent or suppress cruelty to animals. It does this in England, Wales and internationally, by providing animal welfare services and campaigning for better treatment of animals.

### The RSPCA's vision

To work for a world in which all humans respect and live in harmony with members of the animal kingdom.

### Mission statement

The RSPCA as a charity will, by all lawful means, prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate suffering of animals by:

- operating a strong and effective national, regional and branch organization dedicated to providing a public service,
- delivering effective relief of animal suffering and enforcing the law
- working tirelessly to reduce the harmful impact of human activities on animals through education and campaigning
- maintaining, as an organization, the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness.

## Why we had to tell this sad story

TODAY's story of the abandoned basset hounds later shot by the RSPCA will bring widespread reaction from the public.

We believe it is right that the story is aired – and right that there should be debate. Furthermore we believe it was right for the RSPCA to hold an inquiry.

Clearly, the couple who resigned in protest at the treatment of these two dogs, believe a mistake was made. They are angry about the case. They believe that these animals should not have been shot.

They, together with other basset hound experts, believe there is a huge difference between putting an animal to sleep by lethal injection on one hand or by taking it outside to be shot on the other.

This debate does need public airing because



people like the National Basset Club say there was a different way of destroying the animals, if indeed that was the only option left. The Evening Star is a huge supporter of the work of the RSPCA and we have carried many stories about their rescued animals and their efforts in the community. We will continue to do so. But we would failing in our story if we did not reveal the tragic story of the Ipswich bassets.

**What do you think? Write in to Your Letters, Evening Star, 30 Lower Brook Street, Ipswich, IP4 1AN or send us an e-mail to [eveningstarletters@eveningstar.co.uk](mailto:eveningstarletters@eveningstar.co.uk) or visit the forum at [www.eveningstar.co.uk](http://www.eveningstar.co.uk)**