

The report indicated that placing the dogs in a foster home environment was not an option as they had no conception of living in a home environment, and in the vet's opinion doing so would cause them increased distress and suffering.

The summary further advises that the shelter environment is not beneficial to any dog when they are required to stay long term.

I would like to deal with the second point first. It is a documented fact that the Border Collie are a highly intelligent and sensitive breed who will suffer a high level of anxiety if they are not sufficiently stimulated both mentally and physically. Living in a shelter environment for any Border Collie would create a high level of anxiety and stress.

Keeping them in the same kind of living arrangement (albeit much cleaner) is not conducive to any change in behaviour – how could it be? If nothing changes, nothing changes!

Four months is not a long time for medication to be efficacious. To be successful it may have needed several different types of medication to be tried over a period of even up to 2 years – before it can be convincingly demonstrated that medication could not help these dogs live a good life.

Medication should also be accompanied by a training/wholistic treatment plan which should have included an intensive rehabilitation program in a home environment.

I accept that the average family home may not have been suitable for these dogs – but I have consistently found that there are people within the community who ARE prepared to take the time, put in the work and have the patience to help these troubled dogs learn to experience being family dogs and ultimately live their best life.

Why was it not an option for the RSPCA to seek suitable foster homes and work with the people and the dogs on a consistent, regular and intensive basis to effect change in their lives? Surely, this is a skill set that could have been contracted in via AVBS, who clearly have a Rehabilitation Trainer.ns.

I surmise that the recommendations made by [REDACTED] in their report are those that the RSPCA wanted them to arrive at – given they were paying them to conduct the Assessment and produce the report. I imagine that if I contracted them to provide me with advice as to whether I could take a group of dogs and satisfactorily rehabilitate them over a period of 12 months with ongoing support and ultimately place them in suitable homes that would accept their residual limitations – that they would produce a program and schedule to do just that.

I have seen for myself numerous examples of dogs that have come from puppy farms and demonstrate the behaviours recorded in the Assessment Report:

- Unwillingness to approach strangers and demonstration of fear, stress and anxiety including urination
- Fear of approach with a lead
- Demonstration of freezing response
- Fearful body language
- Terror when faced with the external environment – eg an outside open space
- Total refusal to eat in front of people
- Hiding under a bush away from people and avoiding contact
- Hunched body, terrified eyes, tail firmly tucked and taking a very wide berth around people in the vicinity
- Drooling and being sick in the car due to fear