

## **Sleeping Ruff - A 30 minute documentary film by Vetwork UK and Walking Pictures**

Screened in the 2004 Edinburgh International Film Festival as part of the Saltire Society Grierson Award for Short Documentary.

Screened at the IAHAIO 10th International Conference on Human-Animal Interactions, Glasgow, Scotland, October 6-9, 2004.

For further information about Sleeping Ruff, including how to order a copy, please contact [Susi Arnott](#).

Phil Arkow, acclaimed lecturer, author and humane educator, writing in the SCAS Journal, Autumn 2004, about the IAHAIO 10th International Conference on Human-Animal Interactions, Glasgow, Scotland, October 6-9, 2004:

"The impact of the Human Companion Animal Bond on the lives of homeless people was vividly described in a dramatic documentary video, Sleeping Ruff. Vetwork and Walking Pictures used cinema verité techniques to interview 'street people' in Scotland and capture their attitudes about pets in a stunning exploration of the HCAB in the lives of a marginal population."

[Sleeping Ruff](#) from [Susi Arnott](#) on [Vimeo](#).

### **What the Big Issue in Scotland wrote about the film:**

"Dog Days: A short film explores the strong bond between homeless people and their animals with tenderness, writes Catherine Coyle.

Some of the greatest partnerships ever forged have been between man and dog: Blue Peter's John Noakes and Shep, Wallace and Gromit. No one ever wanted to see the Littlest Hobo leave town because they had grown so attached to the maverick canine. It's a significant relationship and one that is difficult to penetrate. Imagine then, just how important your dog is if it's the only family you have in the world.

This is the theme explored in Sleeping Ruff, a short film being screened at this year's Edinburgh International Film Festival. The documentary captures a glimpse of nine homeless people in Edinburgh through their relationships with their dogs. 'The idea initially came when Dunedin Harbour hostel in Edinburgh made contact to discuss their pet policy', recounts vet Stephen Blakeway, from Vetwork, a charity working for appropriate animal health services and examining human-animal bonds.

Blakeway teamed up with film-maker Susi Arnott to seek out street dogs and their owners for their film. 'The way homeless people have such close attachments to animals was something I hadn't considered,' says Arnott. 'It seemed like a lot of people were prejudiced, myself included, when it came to homeless people and animals.

'Stephen had told me that street dogs are often healthier than many 'sitting room' dogs, for example. When I heard that I became convinced that this was a film that needed to be made.'

What Sleeping Ruff gently shows is that as the people in the film become more excluded and isolated, their dogs become absolutely central to their existence and in many cases, their only reason for waking up in the morning.

Alan reckons he'd be in jail if it wasn't for Holly. 'She keeps me on the straight and narrow because I spend my drinking money on food for her,' says Alan. 'She's like my wee bairn now. For some people who don't have families, their dogs are their only company.' Faced with the prospect of another cold

night on the street or a place in a hostel, every single dog owner was adamant that if their dog couldn't remain with them, they'd stay on the street.

'I only go places where my dog will be allowed in,' says Chrissie, who is searching for her runaway dog, Crow. 'I prefer dogs to people. They protect you on the street, barking to warn the owner. There's an unconditional love that you get from your dog. I'm going to hunt the country till I find him again.'

The film-makers hope that *Sleeping Ruff* will become a training tool for those working in the field, highlighting the importance of the bond between human and animal. In a broader sense, the film aims to dispel some of the myths about home-less people and their pets and with almost no narration, the dog owners give an honest and heartfelt account of their relationships. As one interviewee states: 'I'd turn down a house if the dogs weren't allowed. I'd choose to sleep rough to stay with them.'

*Sleeping Ruff* screened in the 2004 Edinburgh International Film Festival as part of the Saltire Society Grierson Award for Short Documentary, a scheme that supports Scottish talent."