

Dear Miss Lau,

I am writing to you in desperation because I have not been able to obtain any positive answers nor favourable solutions to my predicament. I would respectfully request you to please consider my plea at the LegCo Meeting before the Legislation is gazetted on February 13th.

I read in the SCMP today of the Government's proposed legislation to ban poultry farming in homes. I fully appreciate the basis upon which the ban is to be implemented, but I am wondering if any consideration or provisions have been made for individuals who keep birds as pets, within the confines of their own home compound, rather than as a trade or farmed for public consumption.

I live alone in a 3-storey house with its own enclosed garden and compound. I have a mix of 11 doves and pigeons, which I obtained from a market 8 years ago when the birds were mere baby chicks and I have raised them as pets for the past 8 years. To date, the birds are very healthy, robust and happy. I have not yet lost a single one of these birds through disease or injury and they are still the original 11 birds I brought into my home 8 years ago. I also keep dogs, live fish and turtles (terrapsins) as pets and I even employ 2 domestic helpers within my household so that all my pets are well cared for and without compromise. My birds have been with me for the past 8 years. I have built an enclosure on my roof patio and also a double storey bird house. The birds do not fly out of the vicinity of my home and compound as their wings are regularly clipped. As such, they do not come into contact with the general public. The birds are allowed out of the birdhouse once a day, when my maids go up to feed them and clean out their birdhouse and the enclosure. This is carried out daily and without exception.

I have called the AFD Hotline and have been passed from one department to another, and no one is able to give me direction as to whether my pets have to be surrendered to the AFD when the Legislation is in force. There also appears to be a lack of clarity, according to the information I received from the AFD officers, as to the definition of poultry vs. birds and no demarcation between farmed animals vs. pets. Obviously, I do not wish to surrender my pets, as they are pets. By the same token, I do not wish to break any laws of HK. I love my birds as I do all my pets, care for them and if I had to give them up to be slaughtered by the AFD this would totally traumatise me. I have tried to inquire whether I can get my birds inoculated against the Bird Flu virus as a safety measure so that I can be exempted from having to surrender them to the authorities. No one has able to give me a concrete answer nor a favourable solution. I have also called the SPCA for assistance but have not been able to get any help.

In this regard, would you please consider my case and offer me some relief as to what measures I can deploy in order to keep my pets, without having to surrender them to the AFD to be killed. Really, this would totally devastate me as the only reason why I took on these birds when they were mere chicks 8 years ago, was to give them a chance to live their life to its fullest, and not to be slaughtered by a market vendor and end up on someone's dining table as a meal.

Thank you for reading my letter and I hope that you will be able to help me.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Rowena Hawkins

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