

**For discussion
on 9 June 2009**

Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Progress in Introducing Additional Conditions of
Animal Traders Licence**

PURPOSE

This paper sets out the progress in the proposed introduction of additional licensing conditions for animal traders involved in dog trading with a view to tightening the control of the sources of dogs offered for sale for public health and animal welfare reasons.

BACKGROUND

2. Under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Animal Traders) Regulations (Cap 139B) (the regulations), any person who sells, or offers to sell, animals or birds has to obtain an Animal Trader Licence (ATL), unless that animal or bird is kept by him as a pet or any offspring thereof. The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation may attach appropriate conditions to an ATL to ensure effective control.

3. Currently there are some 180 licensed animal traders operating as pet shops involved in the trading of dogs. Under the existing conditions of an ATL for such pet shops, all dogs offered for sale must be implanted with a microchip and covered by a vaccination certificate in respect of common infectious diseases affecting dogs. In addition, the sale of unweaned or diseased dogs is prohibited. Staff of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Department (AFCD) would inspect pet shops regularly to check their compliance with the regulations and the licensing conditions.

4. At the meeting of the Panel on 13 May 2008, we briefed Members on the results of a review on the ATL conditions for pet shops selling dogs after consultation with interested parties such as animal welfare groups and the pet trade. In brief, the additional ATL conditions would stipulate that pet shops may only obtain dogs for sale from four sources, namely –

- (a) dogs legally imported into Hong Kong;
- (b) dogs bred by dog breeders with valid ATLs;
- (c) dogs obtained from other pet shops with valid ATLs; and
- (d) dogs obtained from a bona fide private pet owner¹.

We advised Members that we would be mapping out the implementation details.

PROGRESS MADE

5. We have since followed up on two fronts –

- (a) supply side facilitation – assisting animal breeders to apply for ATL and reexamining quarantine status of potential sources of supply from outside Hong Kong; and
- (b) mapping out the implementation details.

Paragraphs 6 to 8 below set out the details.

6. AFCD has sought to proactively advise dog breeders interested in applying for ATL the conditions that they need to meet in respect of animal welfare and disease control. It has also assisted them to liaise with other relevant Government departments on such issues as land and planning. Two commercial dog breeders have since then successfully obtained the ATL. It is expected that more commercial dog breeders will apply for ATL upon the implementation of the proposed additional licensing conditions. We will continue to provide assistance to them in this regard.

7. At present, imported puppies are required to be quarantined until they are 5 months old or for a period of 120 days depending on the disease

¹ For the current purpose, the owner keeps a single breed of dog and not more than two entire (non-desexed) bitches at the same time.

status of the exporting territories. The quarantine requirement is a very important safeguard on public health grounds to prevent the introduction of such diseases as rabies. Previously only the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Hawaii of the United States enjoyed the exemption status from the above requirement. Following a review of the disease status of places outside Hong Kong, AFCD has added two places, i.e., Japan and Taiwan, to the exemption list. This should help increase the proper sources and supply of imported dogs.

8. We have also drawn up the implementation details of the additional ATL conditions. In the process, we have taken into account the views from the trade and animal welfare groups, and sought legal advice as appropriate. We are now ready to roll out the conditions. The gist of the proposed arrangements is as follows.

- (a) For dogs imported or acquired from licensed pet shops/breeders (paragraph 4(a) to (c) above), pet shops are required to ensure that the dogs are either covered by valid import permits or documents indicating that they come from licensed pet shops or breeders.
- (b) For dogs acquired from bona fide private pet owners (paragraph 4(d) above), pet shops are required to ensure that the dogs hold valid dog licences or are offspring of a licensed dog as stated in a veterinary certificate, and to obtain a declaration from the private pet owner that he/she keeps a single breed of dogs and not more than two bitches not neutered to minimize abuses.
- (c) All pet shops are required to keep all documents detailing the sources of dogs acquired and make them available for inspection by staff of AFCD or authorized agencies.
- (d) We have also liaised with private veterinarians and obtained their understanding of the new arrangements and the need for them to provide the necessary veterinary certificates.

NEXT STEPS

9. We are now ready to roll out the additional ATL conditions. To allow the trade and pet owners to familiarize themselves with the new requirements, we would notify in writing the pet trade, animal welfare groups, veterinary surgeons and pet owners associations of the new requirements and related arrangements. Seminars would be arranged to brief them about the implementation details of the new licensing conditions. We would also step up efforts in publicizing the new arrangements through uploading the relevant information to AFCD's website, dissemination of leaflets and other publicity

materials, as well as organizing educational and publicity activities in collaboration with animal welfare groups and related non-governmental organizations as necessary.

10. To allow the pet trade sufficient time to prepare for the new requirements, we intend to make the additional ATL conditions effective in the fourth quarter of 2009 for all existing as well as new licences. To check the compliance of pet shops and breeders, we will step up our inspection of licensed pet shops. We will also conduct investigations into reports of suspected illegal dog trading activities, including those conducted through advertising on the internet, and take prosecution actions whenever there is sufficient evidence.

11. We believe that the proposed new measure would serve to strengthen our existing control of pet shops and breeders involved in trading of dogs to safeguard public health and animal welfare.

Food and Health Bureau

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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