

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights

**Government's responses to the follow-up items
requested by the Subcommittee**

At the meeting on 24 April 2017, Members of the Subcommittee requested the Government to provide written responses to the following issues:

- (a) Whether the Government would consider providing more financial assistance to animal welfare groups for operating voluntary Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programme and assisting them to address the space shortage problem in housing captured stray animals;
- (b) Whether the Government would consider adopting the "zero euthanasia" of stray animals policy which Taiwan had recently implemented starting February 2017 ; and
- (c) Providing the implementation details and timetable of installing a cattle grid in Sai Kung Country Park.

2. In addition, Members passed the motions under the respective agenda items below and requested the Government to provide responses.

Agenda Item: "Efforts in management of stray animals"

- (d) That 'this Subcommittee urges the Administration to adopt the following measures:
 1. To set up re-homing centres and allow members of the public to adopt animals directly from these centres;
 2. To fully implement the TNR programme, so as to reduce the number of dogs in the community at source; and
 3. To review its inhumane policy of setting out to catch community animals indiscriminately upon receiving complaints from members of the public and subjecting such animals to euthanasia usually after four days.' (Moved by: Hon Claudia MO)

Agenda Item: “Management of Stray Cattle”

(e) That ‘this Subcommittee urges the Administration to adopt the following measures:

1. To formulate a sustainable policy on the conservation of cattle to replace its existing policy on cattle management which is both inhumane and unsustainable; and
2. To keep track of the whereabouts, and evaluate the health conditions and adaptability of relocated cattle. The Administration should not shirk its responsibilities on the excuse of not intervening in the activities of wild animals. According to international practice, wild animals (especially young ones) returned to the wild will be kept under surveillance for at least one year.’ (Moved by: Hon Claudia MO)

3. The Government’s consolidated response is as follows:

- (a) The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been collaborating with various animal welfare organisations (AWOs) in promoting animal welfare and better animal management. Most AWOs are non-profit making. The Government has been providing partial funding to them as long as resources permit to support their work, such as for establishing animal adoption centres and education resources centres, renovating adoption centre facilities and building kennels, providing neutering and medical services to animals (including those pending re-homing), and organising educational and publicity activities to promote adoption service and disseminate the message of responsible pet ownership. AFCD has set aside \$1.5 million in 2017/18 for application by AWOs. We will closely monitor the situation on funding applications and consider adjusting the funding amount if necessary to support AWOs’ work in promoting animal welfare.

Regarding the handling of stray animals caught, AWOs will arrange suitable animals for adoption by the public. In case of a lack of sufficient animal holding space, AWOs could send the animals to AFCD for follow-up. Animals left

unclaimed and in good health and assessed by a veterinary surgeon as having a gentle temperament and suitable for adoption will be transferred to other AWOs for adoption by the public.

The TNR trial programme, launched in 2015, will be completed in 2018. As the scheme's effectiveness has yet to be comprehensively assessed, AFCD will consider the way forward upon the scheme's completion. Please refer to LC paper No. CB(2)1231/16-17(01) for details.

- (b) As explained in (a) above, AFCD will transfer suitable animals to AWOs for adoption by the public. Only those assessed to be unsuitable for re-homing due to health or temperament reasons will be euthanised. In fact, a number of international animal organisations, including the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), agree that in situations where the number of stray dogs caught remains high or the dogs are not fit for adoption despite the deployment of various management measures, euthanasia would be an appropriate and humane solution.

Taiwan started implementing the "zero euthanasia" of stray animal policy in the first quarter of 2017. Its implementation and assessment are subject to further observation. AFCD will pay close attention to the development. AFCD will closely monitor the measures on the management of stray animals adopted by the international community, and take into account the unique local situation, with a view to improving our stray animal management measures.

- (c) AFCD is consulting the departments concerned, including the Transport Department (TD) and the Highways Department, on the possible location(s) of cattle grid(s) to be installed in Sai Kung Country Park, their technical feasibility, practicability, and impacts on pedestrians and other road users. According to TD, cattle grids are used in farms on private land in overseas countries to prevent cattle from going outside the farms. In view of the overseas experience in such designs, there are potential safety hazards to road users if they are installed on public roads. Please refer to LC Paper No. CB(2)1231/16-17(07) for details.

- (d) As explained in (b) above, AFCD will transfer unclaimed animals assessed as suitable for adoption by the public to the AWO partners. Currently, there are a total of 16 AWOs partnering with AFCD in providing animal re-homing service in different districts throughout the territory. AFCD's partnership with these AWOs to provide adoption services of animals received could provide more locations to service the public and better meet the current demands of the community. AFCD is actively liaising with other AWOs, with a view to further increasing the number of AWO partners, and enhancing re-homing service. It will also promote adoption through publicity and education.
- (e) On the management of stray cattle, the Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach for managing stray cattle. We have been continuously exploring ways to enhance measures that will help minimise the public nuisance caused by stray cattle while safeguarding the cattle's welfare.

Under the "Capture-Sterilisation-Relocation" programme, AFCD's veterinary surgeons will perform check-up and assessment on the cattle prior to relocation. While AFCD does not trace the whereabouts of individual cattle, its staff will visit the areas frequented by cattle on a weekly basis to monitor their health and conditions of the relocation sites. If injured cattle are found or reported by the public, AFCD will deploy staff to follow up the cases and provide appropriate treatment. Most of the relocated cattle are generally healthy. The objective of AFCD's work in stray cattle management is to protect the welfare of these cattle so that the cattle could live in the natural environment. There is no question of inhumane handling or unsustainability of the cattle involved.

We will continue to keep in close contact with the relevant district councils, rural committees, local residents and AWOs, and identify other feasible measures to minimise the nuisance of stray cattle while protecting their welfare.

**Food and Health Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Transport Department
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