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Panel on Security

**Information note prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 2 April 2019**

**The Animal Watchers Scheme of the Police and the Government's
cooperation with multiple agencies in the prevention of cruelty to animals**

Issues relating to law enforcement against cruelty to animals had been raised in the context of discussions by the Panel on Security ("the Panel") on the Commissioner of Police's annual report on the law and order situation of Hong Kong. Similar concerns were also discussed by the former Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights formed under the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene in the Sixth Legislative Council. Most members expressed concern about whether the Administration should consider establishing "animal police" teams in Hong Kong specially tasked to investigate into cases of animal cruelty and abandonment. They also considered that appropriate training should be provided to frontline enforcement officers to enhance their investigation capability of animal cruelty cases.

2. Members were advised that the Police attached great importance to the prevention of animal cruelty cases and a multi-agency approach was adopted in investigating such cases. Animal cruelty cases received by the Police would initially be attended to by uniformed officers in the respective districts. Under the Animal Watch Scheme introduced in 2011, staff from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals could be invited to the scene to provide professional advice if necessary. If there was a prima facie case of cruelty to animals upon initial investigation, the case would be taken up by a crime investigation team.

3. Members were also advised that the Police were committed to tackling crimes in relation to cruelty to animals and had set up dedicated investigation teams, comprising police officers with criminal investigation experience and skills in handling serious crimes, in the 22 police districts with criminal investigation teams in the territory since April 2018. Relevant training was provided to the police officers to ensure that cases of cruelty to animals would

be handled in a professional and consistent manner. Depending on the manpower situation, the nature and severity of cases and the crime trend of the district concerned, the commander of each police district would consider assigning cases of cruelty to animals to dedicated teams for investigation and analysis. In addition, the Police would incorporate publicity efforts to raise public awareness on prevention of cruelty to animals.

4. As announced in the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address, to enlist wider public support and participation in their work to fight against cruelty to animals, the Police would implement the Animal Watchers Scheme in the financial year 2019-2020 with a view to agglomerating the strengths of animal lovers at the community level in the four directions of education, publicity, investigation and intelligence-gathering, raising public awareness on prevention of cruelty to animals, encouraging the public to report in a timely manner as well as provide information and clues useful for investigations. At the policy briefing-cum-meeting of the Panel on 2 November 2018, members were advised that in tandem with the implementation of the Animal Watchers Scheme, the Police would coordinate and deepen the mutual understanding and partnership among relevant stakeholders, including relevant government departments, animal welfare organizations and animal lovers.

5. The Administration will brief the Panel on the details of the Animal Watchers Scheme and its cooperation with multiple agencies in the prevention of cruelty to animals at the meeting on 2 April 2019. Three relevant questions relating to prevention of cruelty to animals raised by Members at the Council meetings and the Administration's replies are in **Appendices I to III**.

Press Releases

LCQ12: Animal welfare

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 22):

Question:

It has been reported that several incidents of animals (including tortoises, guinea pigs, rabbits and dogs) being abused en masse have occurred recently. In addition, quite a number of people have released animals casually, thus affecting the local ecological environment, and quite a number of the released animals died as they were unable to adapt to the environment. Regarding the protection of animal rights, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of reports on animal abuse received by the authorities and the respective numbers of persons prosecuted and convicted, in each year since January 2014; the maximum and minimum punishments imposed on those persons convicted;

(2) as it has been mentioned in the Policy Agenda published recently that the authorities will study the existing legislation related to animal welfare, and explore introducing a concept of positive duty of care on animal keepers, of the details of such work (including the legislation to be covered and the work schedule);

(3) given that in reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the 18th of last month, the Government indicated that regarding the suggestion to bring cats and dogs into the scope of section 56 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) (which stipulates that when an accident involving a vehicle has occurred on a road and caused damage to an animal, the driver of that vehicle must stop the vehicle and report the accident to the Police as soon as possible), "we are reviewing the matter with reference to overseas practices. We will, upon conclusion of the review, consider amending the relevant legislation", of the progress of the review and the specific legislative timetable;

(4) of the number of complaints about activities on release of animals received by the authorities each year since January 2014, broken down by the species of the animals involved and the location where the release was conducted; whether they have, in response to such complaints, taken animal rescue operations and law enforcement actions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) as places such as Taiwan, Macau and Singapore have reportedly enacted legislation to regulate acts of release of animals, whether the authorities will consider afresh enacting legislation to regulate acts of release of animals in Hong Kong, and prohibit the release of animals at locations of high ecological value; if not, of the reasons for that;

(6) as quite a number of people participating in activities on release of animals do not understand the possible impacts of such activities on the ecological environment, whether the authorities

will step up public education with a view to reducing that type of activities;

(7) whether it has conducted studies on the impacts of releasing animals of alien species on those animals of local species and on the ecological environment; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(8) whether it will make reference to the practices of foreign countries and consider afresh establishing an animal police team to step up protection of animal rights; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Environment Bureau and the Security Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) Since 2014, the Hong Kong Police Force and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) have received the following number of reports or complaints on suspected cruelty to animals: 237 (2014); 236 (2015); 262 (2016) and 262 (the first three quarters of 2017). According to the results of investigations, most of the cases did not involve cruelty to animals. As at June this year, the number of cases involving cruelty to animals in which there was sufficient evidence for instituting prosecutions, and the number of convictions and the relevant penalties are tabulated as follows:

Year	Number of persons prosecuted	Number of convicted defendants	Penalties	
			Fine	Imprisonment
2014	29	24	From \$2,000 to \$20,000	From 6 days to 1 year and 4 months
2015	11	10	\$2,000	From 14 days to 2 months
2016	15	11	\$5,000	From 28 days to 2 months
2017 (January to June)	10	10	Not applicable	From 10 days to 2 months

(2) The Government attaches great importance to enhancing animal welfare. To further enhance the protection of animal welfare, we are studying the existing legislation related to animal welfare, such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169), by making reference to international experience and trend and in the light of the actual situation in Hong Kong. Apart from preventing cruelty to animals, we will explore the introduction of a concept of positive duty of care on animal keepers, having regard to the opinions previously expressed by stakeholders.

(3) Regarding the suggestion to cover cats and dogs in section 56 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374), we expect to complete

the review on the matter within 2018.

(4) From 2014 to October this year, AFCD has received a total of six complaints on suspected improper release of animals, of which four involving tortoises, whilst the other species concerned included freshwater shrimp and fish. Five cases were located in Tai Po and the location of the remaining case was not specified.

After conducting site inspections upon receipt of the complaints, AFCD could not establish whether there were any individuals conducted animal release activities, but some tortoises were found on site and then brought to AFCD's animal management centre for observation. Having assessed their condition by a veterinary surgeon, most of the tortoises were subsequently handed over to animal welfare organisations for adoption by members of the public.

(5) and (6) The Government has no plan to regulate animal release activities by legislative means at this stage. Under the current circumstances in Hong Kong, the Government believes that it is important to strengthen public education so as to raise the public's attention to animal release, and advise them to think carefully before participating in any such activities to avoid affecting the ecological environment. AFCD and three organisations concerned about animal release activities, namely the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and the Hong Kong Society of Herpetology Foundation, have jointly designed a poster for public education on the potential impact of animal release activities. The posters have been distributed and displayed at various locations in the community (including country parks, geoparks, markets, the Bird Garden and ferry piers), and have been sent to over 50 religious organisations. The public is also reminded to consider taking other virtuous actions, such as tree-planting, voluntary services in animal welfare organisations or green groups, etc. in lieu of animal release. AFCD will continue to partner with the organisations concerned about animal release activities in the promotion work on this front.

(7) According to the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021, the Government will build an inventory of invasive alien species and conduct a preliminary risk assessment to better understand the impacts of invasive alien species on the local ecology. These actions are under preparation by AFCD. At the same time, the Government will encourage universities and non-governmental organisations to conduct research studies on invasive alien species through funding support. For example, in the year 2016-17, the Environment and Conservation Fund provided funding to a university to conduct a study on the impacts by exotic herpetofauna on the local ecology.

(8) Currently, a total of 13 police districts under the Hong Kong Police Force have assigned dedicated investigation teams to handle cases of animal cruelty. Depending on manpower deployment, the nature and severity of cases and the crime trend of the district concerned, the commander of each police district may consider assigning cases related to animal cruelty to dedicated teams for investigation and analysis where necessary. All cases of animal cruelty are handled by criminal investigation teams, whose members have received specialised training and possess sufficient experience and investigation skills to follow up such cases. All cases handled by criminal investigation teams are supervised by a Chief Inspector of the Criminal Investigation Division to ensure consistency in investigation practices and attainment of professional standard required by the Police.

In addition, to reinforce the investigation of cases of animal cruelty, the Police launched the Animal Watch Scheme in 2011 to enhance their close cooperation with AFCD, SPCA, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the School of Veterinary Medicine of the City University of Hong Kong, veterinarian associations and other stakeholders on four aspects, namely education, publicity, intelligence collection and investigation, to combat animal cruelty.

Ends/Wednesday, November 22, 2017
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Press Releases

LCQ20: Protecting animal welfare

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 2):

Question:

Incidents of cruelty to animals have occurred from time to time in recent years. Last month, a total of 17 dogs in Tai Po and Fanling died of suspected wrong intake of poisoned baits, and a Japanese spitz was allegedly thrown from a height and died tragically. Recently, a mongrel in Wan Chai was also allegedly thrown from a height and died at the scene. Some members of the public have pointed out that such incidents have shown that there are loopholes in the animal protection legislation in Hong Kong, and that the Police have not formulated a proper mechanism for handling cases of cruelty to animals. They hope that the Government will expeditiously review the laws and enact legislation in response to social needs in order to better safeguard animal welfare. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Government has indicated that it will study the existing legislation related to animal welfare, such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169), and explore the introduction into the law of a concept of positive duty of care of animals on animal keepers, of the latest progress of such work; whether the authorities will (i) create an offence of aggravated cruelty to animals to address certain acts of extreme cruelty to animals (e.g. serial killing of animals by poisoning them) and stipulate a penalty for such offence which is more severe than that under Cap. 169 to enhance the deterrent effect, and (ii) make it mandatory for convicted persons to receive psychological counselling and attend courses on animal-friendly practices; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether the authorities will explore empowering frontline law enforcement officers to take rescue actions when animals are in danger and establishing a system whereby law enforcement departments may issue, to persons who are negligent in taking care of animals, Care Enhancement Notices setting out the areas of improvement which they need to make, so as to prevent more animals from being harmed; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as the Commissioner of Police has recently announced that the number of police districts which have assigned a dedicated team to handle cases of cruelty to animals will increase from 13 to 22, of the scope of work of those police officers belonging to such dedicated teams; how the Hong Kong Police Force will deepen its existing work on animal protection to enhance the efficiency of current law enforcement efforts;

(4) whether there was an upward trend in the number of cases of cruelty to animals in the past five years; if so, whether the authorities will (i) actively consider establishing an animal police team dedicated to investigating cases of cruelty to and

abandonment of animals, stepping up training for frontline law enforcement officers to enhance their ability and alertness in handling such cases, as well as enhancing the knowledge of prosecutors on animal welfare-related legislation to ensure the strict enforcement of the legislation, and (ii) set up a hotline for reporting cruelty to animals; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) as it has been reported that there are greater difficulties in collecting and adducing evidence for dog poisoning cases when compared with other dog abuse cases in general, including the requirement for the prosecution to prove that a person who places/feeds poisoned baits has a motive to poison dogs in order to stand a better chance of convicting him, whether the authorities will explore the enactment of a dedicated legislation on deliberate acts of animal poisoning and actively review the investigation and prosecution procedures on related offences, so as to ensure that offenders will be brought to justice; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) whether the authorities will, by making reference to the United Kingdom's enactment of a new and comprehensive Animal Welfare Act in 2006, expeditiously commence a study and a legislative exercise on introducing an Animal Welfare Ordinance in Hong Kong, so as to ensure that animals are taken care of properly; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to protecting animal welfare, and implements a series of measures, including prohibiting and punishing acts of animal cruelty under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) (Ordinance). In 2011, the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police), together with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong) (SPCA) and veterinary associations, introduced the Animal Watch Scheme (the Scheme) to strengthen efforts in tackling animal cruelty cases.

Having consulted the Security Bureau, my reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1), (2), (5) and (6) Under the Ordinance, any person who, by wantonly or unreasonably doing or omitting to do any act, causes any unnecessary suffering to any animal commits an offence. The Government amended the level of penalty provided in the Ordinance in 2006, by substantially increasing the maximum fine from \$5,000 to \$200,000, and the maximum imprisonment from six months to three years. The maximum penalty under the Ordinance is in fact higher than most developed places.

Poisoning of animals will cause unnecessary sufferings to animals, and may be prosecuted under the Ordinance. We trust that the court will take into account the circumstances and gravity of individual cases in determining sentences. Upon receiving reports of suspected animal cruelty cases, AFCD and the Police will conduct investigations. Under Section 4 of the Ordinance, the Police and the relevant Government officers may enter and search any building if they have reason to suspect that any offence against the Ordinance is being or has been committed. The animals

concerned may be seized and suitably taken care of by AFCD.

To further enhance protection of animal welfare, we are reviewing the existing legislation relating to animal welfare, in particular the Ordinance, including exploring the introduction of a concept of positive duty of care on animal keepers, and authorising Government officers to issue "animal care improvement notices" to persons failing to take proper care of animals. We will formulate relevant legislative proposals by making reference to overseas experience, and considering the actual situation in Hong Kong and views of animal welfare organisations and other stakeholders. Although the maximum penalty under the Ordinance is higher than that of many overseas places, we will also re-examine the penalty level under the Ordinance. We plan to formulate preliminary proposals and consult stakeholders in the second half of 2018.

The Government currently has no plan to amend the legislation to make it compulsory for persons convicted of animal cruelty offences to receive psychological counselling or attend courses on caring for animals. As the motives and underlying reasons for committing such offences could vary from one case to another, requiring each and every person convicted of animal cruelty offences to receive mandatory psychological counselling may not be most appropriate.

(3) and (4) The Scheme combats animal cruelty cases mainly through a four-pronged approach covering education and training, publicity, intelligence gathering and investigation, and aims to reinforce collaboration among various stakeholders and strengthen Police efforts in the investigation of animal cruelty cases. Since 2017, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of the City University of Hong Kong has also joined the Scheme.

On education and training, the Police invite officers from AFCD and SPCA to explain the multi-agency approach for the investigation of animal cruelty cases to Police officers participating in foundation training and criminal investigation courses. In addition, the Police invite relevant officers to share their experience at seminars organised from time to time, and also plan to incorporate the handling of animal cruelty in the training days of various Police districts, so that frontline officers can have a better grasp of the latest situation and trend of animal cruelty.

On publicity and promotion, the Police promote the Scheme to members of the public through various channels, and also encourage frontline units to organise various publicity campaigns in collaboration with AFCD, SPCA, veterinarian associations and animal welfare organisations to engage and secure support from the community, with a view to enhancing public awareness of prevention of cruelty to animals. The Police organised the One-Arm Push Up charity fundraising event earlier on to express their full support for animal care and to draw the public's attention to this problem.

On intelligence gathering, the Scheme encourages SPCA, veterinarians, animal concern groups and members of the public to report any persons or activities suspected to be involved in animal cruelty, so as to strengthen the intelligence gathering network.

On case investigation, in the light of public demand to have dedicated criminal investigation teams set up in Police districts

to handle animal cruelty cases, the Police announced in mid-April this year that dedicated investigation teams, comprising Police officers with criminal investigation experience and skills in handling other serious crimes, have been set up in 22 Police districts with criminal investigation teams across the territory. Furthermore, a platform is in place for dedicated investigation teams of various districts to exchange their experience in crime investigation. The Police also provide training on the handling of animal cruelty cases for relevant officers to ensure they are able to conduct thorough investigations into such cases. Moreover, the Police, AFCD and SPCA have established a cooperation mechanism, whereby officers from AFCD and SPCA will provide professional advice and assist in investigation at the scene of an animal cruelty case where necessary.

There was fluctuation in the number of animal cruelty cases in the past five years, and there is no obvious upward trend. Members of the public may call 999 to report a suspected act of animal cruelty to the Police, or 1823 Call Centre to AFCD. Upon receipt of a report, the relevant departments will conduct investigations and take appropriate actions.

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Appendix III

Press Releases

LCQ22: Protection of animal rights, interests and welfare

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (November 14):

Question:

Regarding the protection of animal rights, interests and welfare, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Police will roll out the "Animal Watchers Scheme" in the next financial year, of the details of the scheme (including the specific work initiatives and timetable, manpower required, estimated expenditure, and what types of persons may take part in the scheme);

(2) of the Government's initiatives for protecting animal rights, interests and welfare as well as the expenditure involved, in each of the past three years and in the coming year (set out by work initiative);

(3) as the Government plans to amend to section 56 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap 374) (which provides that where an accident involving a vehicle on a road occurs whereby damage is caused to an animal, the driver of that vehicle shall stop and report the accident to the Police as soon as possible) to bring cats and dogs within the ambit of the section, of the relevant details (including the legislative timetable); whether it will (i) set up a hotline for drivers to report to the Police such accidents or for eyewitnesses to report to the Police hit-and-run drivers involved in such accidents, and (ii) enhance its support for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong) in handling injured animals;

(4) as a study report has pointed out that the number of cats and dogs kept as pets in Hong Kong will increase from about 297 100 in 2005 to about 545 600 in 2019, whether the Government will explore the establishment of a public hospital for animals, so as to provide pet owners with an option other than private veterinary clinics;

(5) as the Police announced in April this year that dedicated investigation teams had been set up in the 22 Police districts across the territory with criminal investigation teams to handle cases of animal cruelty, of (i) the training received by members of such teams and (ii) the number of cases that such teams have handled so far; and

(6) whether it will consider afresh the proposal to establish an animal police team and, by way of amending the relevant legislation, vest in the Police more power to handle cases of animal cruelty; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to promoting and safeguarding animal welfare, and has been adopting a multi-pronged approach in this regard. Having consulted the Security Bureau, my reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) To enlist public support and assistance in combatting acts of cruelty to animals, the Police will implement the "Animal Watchers" Scheme in the financial year 2019-20, with a view to agglomerating the strengths of animal lovers at the community level in four directions of education, publicity, investigation and intelligence-gathering; raising public awareness on prevention of cruelty to animals; and encouraging the public to report in a timely manner as well as providing information that could help investigations. Participants of the Scheme could disseminate to the community the messages of caring for animals and preventing cruelty to animals through organising and participating in various activities promoting animal welfare. In addition, the Police will co-ordinate and deepen the co-operation among stakeholders, including relevant government departments, animal welfare organisations (AWOs) and animal lovers.

The Police will liaise with stakeholders shortly on the planning and implementation of the Scheme, with a view to finalising the details within next year.

(2) The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been implementing measures and work to safeguard and promote animal welfare. In the past three years, AFCD has been:

(i) implementing and strengthening public education and publicity programme and enhancing their website to promote responsible pet ownership and proper care of animals, advising against abandonment and needless surrendering of pets to the Government, and championing the need for dog licensing and rabies vaccination as well as the benefits of neutering;

(ii) implementing the new licensing regime under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Animal Traders) Regulations (Cap 139B) to regulate pet trading and dog breeding and sale;

(iii) devising codes of practices for the proper trading, breeding and keeping of pets and other animals;

(iv) strengthening enforcement action against pet owners and traders in contravention of relevant legislation;

(v) improving the handling of reports or complaints on cruelty to animals through the inter-departmental special working group comprising representatives of the relevant government departments and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA);

(vi) strengthening collaboration with, and providing technical and financial support to, AWOs in animal adoption and carrying out activities relating to animal welfare and management; and

(vii) assisting the AWOs concerned in implementing the trap-neuter-return trial programme for stray dogs.

The Government will continue to carry out the work on safeguarding animal welfare in the coming year. In addition, the Government is mapping out the major direction and drawing up preliminary proposals for amending and implementing the legislation related to animal welfare, with a view to consulting the public early next year. The proposals include introducing

animal keepers' responsibility of positive duty of care of animals and exploring raising the penalties for acts of cruelty to animals.

The expenditures and estimates involved for carrying out the above work by AFCD over the past three years and in the financial year 2018-19 are as follows:

Financial year	Expenditure (\$ million)
2015-16	50.5
2016-17	53.7
2017-18 (revised estimate)	57.7
2018-19 (estimate)	57.7

AFCD does not have the breakdowns of expenditures involved for carrying out the above work and measures.

(3) AFCD completed in late September 2018 a public consultation on the responsibility requirement for a driver to stop in case of a traffic accident involving injury to an animal. The Government is considering the views received and drafting the legislative amendment proposal, with a view to submitting the proposed amendments to the Legislative Council in the first quarter of next year.

In the event of a traffic accident involving animals, members of the public could report the case to the Police by calling the 999 hotline. After receiving the report, the Police will handle the case in accordance with established procedures, and notify the relevant departments or SPCA to provide assistance as necessary.

The Government has been providing funding to SPCA to carry out work on safeguarding animal welfare, including enhancing the rescue services for handling injured animals.

(4) The number of registered veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong has been increasing in recent years, now amounting to 970. Around 140 veterinary clinics are present in Hong Kong, providing general and specialist consultation services. Furthermore, the clinic established by the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) also provides animal emergency services, and CityU is establishing an animal health centre to provide treatment for various animal diseases. Hence, there are currently sufficient clinics in Hong Kong offering various veterinary services. In addition, as mentioned above, AFCD has been providing subventions to AWOs on their work on safeguarding animal welfare, including the provision of veterinary services. Currently, the Government has no plan to establish a public animal hospital.

(5) and (6) On case investigation, in the light of public demand for the setting up of dedicated criminal investigation teams in Police districts to handle animal cruelty cases, the Police announced in mid-April this year that dedicated investigation teams, comprising officers with experience and skills in investigating and handling other serious crimes, have been set up in the 22 Police districts with criminal investigation teams across the territory. A platform is in place for dedicated investigation teams of various districts to exchange their

experience in investigations. The Police also provide relevant officers with training on handling animal cruelty cases to ensure that they are able to conduct thorough investigations into such cases. In addition, the Police, AFCD and SPCA have established a co-operation mechanism, whereby officers of AFCD and SPCA will provide professional advice and assist in the investigation at the scenes of animal cruelty cases where necessary.

From April to September this year, the dedicated investigation teams in various Police districts handled 57 suspected animal cruelty cases, amongst which 22 have been detected. In the first six months of 2018, the Police initiated prosecution against a total of 11 cases under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap 169). The convicted persons concerned were sentenced to imprisonment of two months to one year. The Police will continue to monitor the crime trend of animal cruelty and step up enforcement in this respect.

On education and training, the Police from time to time invite officers from AFCD and SPCA to explain the multi-agency approach for the investigation of animal cruelty cases to Police officers participating in foundation training and criminal investigation courses. The handling of animal cruelty has also been incorporated in the training days of various Police districts, so that frontline officers can have a better grasp of the latest situation and trend of animal cruelty.

In addition, the Police invite relevant officers to share their experience at seminars organised from time to time. A veterinary officer from AFCD, an officer from SPCA, a professor from the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of CityU and officers from dedicated investigation teams with rich experience in handling relevant cases were invited to share their experience at a large-scale seminar on the handling of animal cruelty cases held at the Police Headquarters in July this year, with a view to enhancing the professionalism and capability of officers in handling such cases. Two overseas experts were also invited to talk about animal welfare and share experience in veterinary forensics at another seminar organised by the Police at the end of October.

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