

立法會
Legislative Council

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(These minutes have been
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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights

**Minutes of the meeting
held on Monday, 22 March 2021, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai

Public Officers : Items I and II

Mr Amor WONG Yiu-tuen
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health
(Food)3

Miss Cher CHUNG Yuen-wing
Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 5

Dr Thomas SIT Hon-chung
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Esther TO Man-wai
Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Management)
Development
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Shirley Veronica CHUK Sheung-ying
Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Management)
Operations
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Item II

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Clerk in attendance : Miss Connie AU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 5

Staff in attendance : Mr Ronald LAU
Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Meisy KWOK
Legislative Assistant (2) 5

Action

I. Management of stray cats and dogs

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)884/20-21(01) to (03) and ISE10/20-21)

The Subcommittee deliberated (index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine) briefed members on the Trap-Neuter-Return Programme implemented by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the measures adopted for managing stray cats, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)884/20-21(01)).

II. Animal management and animal welfare facilities in Hong Kong
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)884/20-21(03) and (04))

3. The Subcommittee deliberated (index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Food and Health briefed members on the implementation of the Administration's

Action policy on managing stray animals and the animal welfare facilities it provided, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)884/20-21(03)).

Follow-up actions arising from the discussion

Admin 5. The Subcommittee requested the Administration to provide information on the following:

- (a) the number of animal welfare organizations ("AWOs") which provided animal shelters/animal rehoming shelters in Hong Kong and the overall capacity of such facilities (with breakdown for cats, dogs and other animals);
- (b) the names of AWOs, the amount of subventions and the area of work being subvented as well as any other assistance being provided to them in the past three years (information to be set out in tabular form); and
- (c) the respective number and percentage of cats and dogs in Hong Kong which had been desexed.

(Post-meeting note: The Chinese version of the Administration's response was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1204/20-21(02) on 18 June 2021.)

III. Any other business

6. Members noted that the next meeting would be scheduled for Monday, 19 April 2021 at 2:30 pm to discuss "Latest developments on the enforcement actions to combat acts of animal cruelty and amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169)".

(Post-meeting note: Members were informed vide LC Paper No. CB(2)924/20-21 issued on 29 March 2021 that the meeting on 19 April 2021 would be changed to be held from 10:45 am to 12:15 pm.)

7. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:04 pm.

**Proceedings of the meeting of the
Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights
on Monday, 22 March 2021, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
<i>Agenda item I – Management of stray cats and dogs</i>			
000536-000949	Chairman Admin	Opening remarks Briefing by the Administration on the Trap-Neuter-Return ("TNR") Programme implemented by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") and the measures adopted for managing stray cats (LC Paper No. CB(2)884/20-21(01))	
000950-001543	Chairman Ms Elizabeth QUAT Admin	Ms Elizabeth QUAT expressed concern about the difficulties encountered by many animal welfare organizations ("AWOs") in operating animal shelters for stray cats and dogs, especially in finding suitable premises and shouldering the medical expenses of the animals. She urged the Administration to provide more support for AWOs and enhance publicity on animal adoption. The Administration advised that AFCD had been working closely with AWOs in promoting rehoming of animals and financially supporting eligible AWOs in running animal welfare facilities. AFCD would also render assistance to AWOs in their applications to the Lands Department ("LandsD") and the Development Bureau ("DEVB") respectively for the grant of short-term tenancy to use vacant government sites and funding support for setting up animal rehoming shelters. With the various measures taken by AFCD to manage stray animals, the number of stray cats and dogs caught by AFCD had decreased by about 70% in the past five years while the rehoming ratios had been on the rise at the same time.	
001544-002231	Chairman Mr Steven HO Admin	Mr Steven HO enquired about the criteria adopted by AFCD in assessing the suitability of stray animals for rehoming. He wondered if consideration would be given to using biotechnology (such as Deoxyribonucleic Acid ("DNA") testing) to assist in tracing the sources of stray animals.	

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		<p>The Administration advised that the DNA information of the stray animals alone would give little clues as to their sources. Other than enhanced publicity to promote animal adoption and responsible pet ownership, AFCD had also stepped up inspections to rural areas to enforce the licensing requirement for dogs. In addition, AFCD would deploy mobile vaccination teams to facilitate the vaccination and microchipping of dogs on fishing boats and in the remote areas of the New Territories. According to a survey commissioned by AFCD a few years ago, over 80% of the dogs in Hong Kong were licensed under the Rabies Regulation (Cap. 421A).</p>	
002232-003019	Chairman Mr SHIU Ka-fai Admin	<p>Mr SHIU Ka-fai's enquiry and the Administration's reply regarding the reasons why cats were more popular among adopters in general.</p> <p>Mr SHIU expressed concern about the health condition of a cattle in Sai Kung wearing a global positioning system ("GPS") tracking collar. The Administration responded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) it was a pilot scheme under the joint effort of AFCD and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to collect data about the cattle's movement patterns and places of stay for the purpose of formulating relevant measures to reduce cattle related traffic accidents ("the Pilot Scheme"); (b) the cattle had tried on the GPS tracking collar in AFCD's Animal Management Centre for some time to facilitate it to get accustomed to the collar before being returned to the Sai Kung Country Park; (c) the weight of the GPS tracking collar was not heavy for an adult cattle and therefore, would not affect its normal life. AFCD's veterinary officers or staff would inspect the cattle daily to ensure that the cattle's health was unaffected; and (d) the collar would be removed from the cattle when collection of data was completed in about four to six weeks' time. <p>Mr SHIU suggested that the Administration should reduce the size of the GPS tracking collar as far as practicable in order to minimize any discomfort that</p>	

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		<p>it caused to the cattle. The Administration explained that the size of the GPS tracking collar was limited by the high-capacity battery fitted onto it for the long-term surveillance of the cattle in the wilderness.</p>	
003020-003928	Chairman Admin	<p>The Chairman's concern regarding the bulky design of the GPS tracking collar and the Administration's response. The Chairman reiterated his view that the Administration should consider fitting reflective collars onto stray cattle to alert drivers of cattle wandering on the road at night. The Administration undertook to explore the suggestion. It added that the data collected from the Pilot Scheme would facilitate the installation of sensors on selected lamp posts in the Sai Kung Country Park to detect the presence of cattle nearby and switch on the street lights concerned automatically so that the cattle could be seen more easily by the drivers at night.</p> <p>The Chairman called on the Administration to strengthen its support for organizations in running the TNR programmes. The Administration advised that it would provide appropriate support to AWOs and other organizations interested in running the TNR programmes.</p> <p>The Chairman's enquiry and the Administration's response regarding the handling of stray cats and dogs caught by AFCD.</p>	
003929-004642	Chairman Mr Steven HO Admin	<p>Mr Steven HO reiterated his question regarding the criteria adopted by AFCD in assessing the suitability of stray animals for rehoming. He also sought information on the practices adopted by other countries/places in this regard.</p> <p>The Administration advised that in general, animals having a gentle temperament and in good health were suitable for adoption. For animals whose health conditions or temperament were assessed as unsatisfactory by AFCD's veterinary officers but still possible for rehoming after appropriate treatment or temperament improvement, AFCD would provide treatment to them and improve their temperament as far as possible to increase their chance of adoption.</p> <p>Mr HO considered that more pet-inclusive facilities should be provided in new non-residential developments and the use of euthanasia in handling stray animals should be reduced.</p>	

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004643-004948	Chairman Admin	<p>The Chairman called on the Administration to step up inspection of construction sites, open storage sites and container yards, and strengthen enforcement actions against abandonment or ill treatment of dogs. He considered that public education on being a responsible owner of the animal should also be enhanced. The Administration advised that it had encouraged the proper management of animals through various publicity and public education programmes and had financially supported AWOs in providing free or low-cost neutering services for dogs on construction sites. Enforcement actions would be taken where appropriate to safeguard the welfare of animals.</p>	
004949-005544	Chairman Mr LAU Kwok-fan Admin	<p>Mr LAU Kwok-fan expressed concern about the problem of animal abandonment arising from the Administration's development clearance exercises in the North East New Territories, Yuen Long and etc. He enquired what arrangements would be made to assist the households concerned in resettling the affected animals, including animals kept in the community which were not owned by any specific household. Mr LAU considered that AFCD and DEVB should liaise with the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HKHA") with a view to relaxing HKHA's policy on the keeping of companion dogs by affected households who were rehoused to public housing estates.</p> <p>The Administration advised that AFCD had been working closely with DEVB and had visited the affected households in the North East New Territories new development areas ("NDAs") over the past two years to promote and appeal to them to make appropriate arrangements for their pets as soon as practicable. They were advised to contact AFCD/AWOs early should they need to surrender their pets. AFCD would proactively liaise with AWOs and try to arrange them to neuter the animals in the NDAs concerned and accommodate the animals surrendered by affected households. DEVB would assist affected households in their applications to HKHA for keeping their dogs as companion dogs.</p> <p>Mr LAU's enquiry and the Administration's reply regarding the compilation of statistics relating to the animals affected by the Administration's development clearance exercises in the New Territories. The Chairman and Mr LAU shared a</p>	

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		<p>similar view that particulars of the animals kept by the affected households or in the community concerned should be registered in the freezing surveys to facilitate relevant bureaux and departments to plan ahead the resettling arrangements.</p>	
005545-010330	<p>Chairman Dr CHENG Chung-tai Admin</p>	<p>Dr CHENG Chung-tai expressed concern about the substantial increase in the number of abandoned animals arising from the Administration's development clearance exercises in New Territories and the resulting pressure on the animal shelters that were already operating at near full capacity. He considered that better arrangements should be put in place for resettling the affected animals and AFCD should take stock of the available capacity of the animal shelters in the New Territories East and the New Territories West. The Administration responded that while AFCD would continue to closely cooperate with AWOs and relevant bureaux/departments to enhance pre-clearance arrangements for affected animals, the households concerned were advised to make their best effort to make appropriate arrangements for resettling their pets.</p> <p>The Chairman and Dr CHENG shared a similar view that the Administration should make suitable arrangements to facilitate affected households to keep the dogs not owned by any specific household in the community as companion dog when they were rehoused to public rental housing.</p>	
<i>Agenda item II – Animal management and animal welfare facilities in Hong Kong</i>			
010331-010649	<p>Chairman Admin</p>	<p>Briefing by the Administration on the implementation of its policy on managing stray animals and the animal welfare facilities it provided (LC Paper No. CB(2)884/20-21(03))</p>	
010650-011516	<p>Chairman Ms Elizabeth QUAT Admin</p>	<p>Ms Elizabeth QUAT reiterated her grave concern about the lack of financial support for AWOs and the difficulties encountered by many of them in finding suitable premises for operating animal shelters which were far away from residential areas and had basic infrastructure like direct road access as well as water and electricity supply.</p> <p>The Administration advised that AFCD would provide subvention to eligible AWOs on a project basis to financially support them in establishing and</p>	

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		<p>operating animal rehoming shelters and improving the facilities of the shelters etc. According to the Administration, AFCD had increased its subvention to AWOs in recent years, around \$2.87 million was granted to AWOs in 2020-2021 while \$3 million was earmarked for the relevant subvention in 2021-2022.</p> <p>Ms QUAT considered that AFCD's subvention was insignificant as compared to the expenditures of AWOs. She urged the Administration to increase its funding support for AWOs and make available suitable vacant government sites to AWOs for operating animal shelters. She also called on the Administration to explore the feasibility of providing a government-run one-stop animal welfare facility.</p> <p>Ms QUAT's enquiry and the Administration's response regarding the funding scope for AWOs. At the request of Ms QUAT, the Administration undertook to provide: (a) the number of AWOs which provided animal shelters/animal rehoming shelters in Hong Kong and the overall capacity of such facilities (with breakdown for cats, dogs and other animals); and (b) the names of AWOs, the amount of subventions and the area of work being subvented as well as any other assistance being provided to them in the past three years.</p>	<p>Admin (paragraph 5(a) and (b) of the minutes refers)</p>
011517-012452	Chairman Mr Steven HO Admin	<p>Mr Steven HO considered that AFCD should collaborate with more AWOs to extend the rehoming service network. He was of the view by controlling the birth rates of cats and dogs, the number of stray animals could be reduced and hence, the government's expenditure in managing them could also be reduced in the long run. Mr HO sought information on the percentage of cats and dogs in Hong Kong that had been neutered. He suggested that consideration should be given to organizing a territory-wide event every few years to provide free neutering services for cats and dogs kept by members of the public.</p> <p>The Administration advised that AFCD had been promoting the benefits of neutering pet animals and the messages of responsible pet ownership and no abandonment of animals through various publicity efforts. At present, AFCD had established partnership with 17 AWOs offering animals received by AFCD for adoption by members of the public through these organizations. Free desexing operations would be provided to animals adopted</p>	

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		<p>through these rehoming partners with the subvention provided by AFCD. The Administration further advised that according to the Thematic Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2010 and 2018 respectively on the keeping of dogs and cats in Hong Kong, the percentage of dogs that had been desexed had increased by about 47% during the period. At the request of Mr HO, the Administration would provide information on the respective number and percentage of cats and dogs in Hong Kong which had been desexed. He suggested that more updated figures should be collected, possibly through local veterinary clinics, to enable the Administration to better formulate its future policy on animal welfare.</p>	<p>Admin (paragraph 5(c) of the minutes refers)</p>
012453-013339	Chairman Admin	<p>The Chairman was of the view that the Administration should play a more active role in respect of animal welfare. He expressed disappointment over the Administration's reluctance to take on board the suggestion of setting up a government-run one-stop animal welfare facility to offer animal rehoming services, veterinary services and pet cremation services etc. to members of the public. He hoped that more types of services could be provided in the new Animal Management and Animal Welfare Building Complex ("the new Complex") under construction in the Kai Tak Development Area.</p> <p>The Chairman shared some other members' concern about the lack of sufficient support for AWOs. Citing as an example the hurdles encountered by an AWO in operating an animal shelter on a piece of agricultural land in the New Territories, the Chairman hoped that the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB") and AFCD would coordinate with the Planning Department and LandsD to better assist AWOs in resolving the issues relating to the use of agricultural land for animal welfare purpose.</p> <p>The Administration advised that AFCD had 17 rehoming partners at present and eligible AWOs were welcome to become rehoming partners of AFCD. AFCD had been providing subventions to eligible AWOs and supporting their work as far as possible and it would keep under review the need to increase the relevant subvention where appropriate. The Administration further advised that the new Complex would feature for the first time, animal rehoming facilities that would be open to the public,</p>	

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		<p>and the facilities would also be used for promotion and education on animal adoption. With the increased animal keeping facilities in the new Complex, AFCD could accommodate more stray animals upon its completion thereby increasing their chances of being rehomed.</p> <p>The Administration advised that the vet-to-pet ratio in Hong Kong was higher than those in many other places and clinics in Hong Kong were offering various veterinary services. With the establishment of a local veterinary school at the City University of Hong Kong, it was expected that there would be more veterinary surgeons practicing in Hong Kong in the coming years.</p> <p>At 4:00 pm, the Chairman extended the meeting for five minutes.</p>	
013340-013737	Chairman Mr Steven HO Admin	<p>Mr Steven HO's views and the Chairman's response regarding the hurdles encountered by the AWO that the Chairman had mentioned in his earlier remarks.</p> <p>Mr HO considered it necessary for FHB and DEVB to work together to address the land issues faced by AWOs. In Mr HO's view, some damaged agricultural land could be considered for rezoning for animal welfare use while high-quality agricultural land should be preserved for agricultural development.</p> <p>The Administration reiterated that AFCD would render assistance to AWOs if they were interested in setting up animal rehoming shelters in vacant government sites.</p>	
<i>Agenda item III – Any other business</i>			
013738-013810	Chairman	Date of next meeting and item for discussion Closing remarks	