



## The Hong Kong Veterinary Association Ltd.

YOUR REF: CB2/PL/FE  
OUR REF:

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2014

Clerk to Panel  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
Attn: Ms Camy YOONG

Dear Ms Yoong

**Re: Item IV " Trap-Neuter-Return trial scheme for stray dogs and handling of animal cases". Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene, meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014.**

The Hong Kong Veterinary Association would like to submit the following comments regarding the above captioned items:

**Trap, Neuter and Return Trial Scheme:**

- We believe there is a need for a "Trap, Neuter and Return" (TNR) scheme for stray dogs to be trialed in Hong Kong to see if it is a viable humane alternative to the current "Trap and Kill" (T&K) adopted by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD).
- The current T&K programme tends to be reactive to specific complaints of nuisance rather than a proactive programme to manage the stray dog population and improve animal welfare.
- The vacuum created by removal of dogs under T&K leaves extra resources for those remaining and the population will quickly return to previous levels with the fundamental issues unresolved.
- However if TNR programmes are to be effective, they must be managed by government recognised coordinators with registered volunteers. It is imperative the programmes are overseen by individuals with suitable training and knowledge in this field. There must be clearly defined operating criteria and common objectives for all parties.
- It is recommended in addition to performing spay/ neuter surgeries the animals selected for return should:
  1. Have visual identification as having being desexed such as ear notching to avoid recapture in the field.
  2. Be vaccinated against rabies and micro-chipped to further public health and also allow for an additional method of tracking and identification for research/population dynamics.
- The dogs will be released back into their original habitat (thus filling what would have previously been a vacuum) but without the propensity to further reproduce.
- Increased empathy towards animals in Hong Kong's Society encourages non-lethal methods of humane animal population control. The Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong) Cat Colony Care Programme (which is TNR on feral cats) is an excellent example and receives a great deal of public support including donations for its continued operations.

- Perceived benefits of TNR include:
  1. Improved dog welfare through the benefits of desexing (behavioural and general health), reduction of offspring (with associated high post-natal mortality rates) and a decrease in the need for T&K which results in poor welfare when these under-socialised dogs are trapped, kept for 4 days and ultimately killed.
  2. Improved public health due to rabies prevention and reduction of nuisance caused by un-desexed roaming dogs.
  3. To achieve the ultimate goal of a reduction of the roaming dog population and associated issues (to run alongside government public education initiatives regarding owned animals e.g. to reduce abandonment, encourage desexing etc).
  4. To engage government and welfare agencies to work together for the betterment of animal welfare through cooperation on TNR projects.

### **Handling of Animal Cases:**

- In recent years there has been an increase in empathy and awareness of the plight of animals in Hong Kong for example cruelty cases which has in turn resulted in a rise of reports to the relevant authorities.
- With regard to enforcement whilst having seen increased penalties the current legislation Cap 169: The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance is reactive and primarily anti-cruelty rather than proactive and welfare orientated. Welfare legislation should include a Duty of Care with minimal standards and Codes of Practice which would encourage good welfare e.g. Animal Welfare Act, UK, 2006.
- The handling of animals involved in prosecution cases needs to be expedient to prevent further cruelty and ensure their welfare is safeguarded. As such it is vital, especially in cases where large numbers of animals are confiscated that animals are released as soon as possible for re-homing or disposal as appropriate either by owner surrender or forfeiture. Keeping animals as “exhibits” for months on end is not in their best interests and in itself can be highly stressful for them depending on the facilities available for their care.
- In the case of animal shelters, hoarders or large scale breeding operations where large numbers of animals are kept. Appropriate legislation and controls including Codes of Practice should be in place to protect the animals concerned and ensure their welfare is paramount. Currently there is no legislation governing the number of animals which one individual can own or minimum space and care requirements.
- Cooperation in handling prosecution cases has seen major improvements in recent years. For instance, the “Animal Watch Scheme” collaboration between AFCD, HK Police, SPCA and HKVA. However, further improvements can still be made.
- We would suggest that consideration be made to empowering SPCA Inspectors who have already received comprehensive training in the field to act in cruelty cases in a manner similar to other countries (e.g. Scotland). This would help increase capacity to act on welfare/cruelty case, as currently only AFCD and the Police have these powers.
- In addition, we would suggest enlisting cooperation from human health workers (e.g. social workers, psychiatrists) where mental health (e.g. example hoarders), hygiene or other issues are key to resolving particular welfare cases.
- Additional resources should be dedicated to education at all levels of society in regards to the care and welfare of all animal. Further resources are needed to continue the training and advancement of key personnel working in the fight for the betterment of animal welfare (veterinary surgeons, government officials and welfare organisations).

Thank you for providing the chance for our Association to comment on the above. We welcome the opportunity for further discussion of these important animal welfare issues.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Tom Mangan  
President, HKVA