



**In response to the Trap-Neuter-Return trial scheme for stray dogs and handling of animal cases**

**Meeting on Tuesday, 14 January 2014, Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**A/ About Animal Friends:**

“Animal Friends” is a Hong Kong registered charity organization and was founded in 2010. Animal Friends aims to provide free desexing for semi-stray animals in and among the New Territory region, and our targeted sites include storage facilities, construction yards, cargo yards, and local villages. In 2012, Animal Friends helped desexed 617 animals (552 dogs and 65 cats), and in 2013, our figures have risen to 1934 (1383 Dogs and 551 cats). From these figures, we could observe a steady growth of number of dogs and cats being desexed, and have reflected Animal Friends’ willingness in providing free desexing services to the semi-strays dogs and cats population in Hong Kong. The communities also support and cooperate with our team, which enable us to desex more animals, especially the dogs. We desex more dogs than other organizations in Hong Kong.

Animal Friends is a 100% volunteer organization. Our funding rely mostly on public donations. Our achievements have reflected the public’s positive view towards our free desexing services and agree to control the animal populations by humane birth control method.

As the public’s awareness towards TNR program grows, the general acceptance with and acknowledgment of TNR as a humane program for semi-stray and stray animal also increases.

With our past experiences, desexing of large number of female dogs and cats (around 90-95%) within a short period of time (approximately 3-6 months) proves to be most effective in controlling number of stray and semi-stray in an area. This also helps to curb the number of complaints of disturbances due to animals by the local people.

- **“Animal Friends” desexing case studies:**

Since 2012, we have been providing free desexing in the remote NT region, and areas include Tai Po, Fanling, Sheung Sui, Pat Heung, Kam Tin, Yuen Long, Sun Tin, Lau Fau Shan, Tuen Mun, and Tin Shui Wai. During these times, we have successfully helped to desex 562 male and 1373 female dogs.

Female dogs may give birth to 2 litters a year, on average 8-10 off-springs in one litter. Based on the total number of desexed female dogs, over 20,000 of dogs were prevented, which would probably become strays. Also, the nuisance caused by mating was also minimized.

The two cases below demonstrated the effectiveness of desexing 95% female dogs in one area. Besides the no. of dogs are maintained, the dog owners also learned the importance of desexing.

- Man Kam To cargo yard:

Close to AFCD Sheung Shui centre, there is a large scale cargo yard situated and sub-let to over 30 companies. Most of these companies keep 5-15 dogs as guard dogs. Therefore, over 100 dogs in the area.

From May-Sep 2013, thanks to the cooperation of the owners, we had successfully desexed over 80 dogs. Besides 4 females which we were unable to capture, all female dogs were done. The no. of dogs is now controlled and maintained.

- Yuen Long cargo yard:

This Yuen Long cargo yard is also large and sub-letting to over 40 companies. On average 5-15 dogs in each company and roam around the area. Started from Jun 2012, with the assistance of the owners, all female dogs and part of male dogs were desexed. ( 3 companies refused to have their dogs desexed)

**B/ Below are our comments and suggestions on the TNR trial program.**

**B.1.Limits of 'TNR' trial program for stray animals:**

- The sample size of 20-30 dogs are too small and non-representative.
- The program should focus on the stability of the population number, and not the decline in the dog population in the test area.
- The TNR test program have been discussed many times on previous occasions, however the idea have been rejected by locals as general acceptance of "returning" "stray" animals to an area.

**B.2. Are they stray or semi-stray dogs?**

- In response to the argument of whether we should "return" the "strays". We should understand the situation.
- A large majority of the dogs in the NT region are usually loosely owned or semi-stray dogs, which are usually kept as guard dogs. Most of these dogs are kept undesexed and unlicensed, as most dog owners are reluctant to claim responsibility of their dogs if their dogs are captured by the AFCD Animal Control Unit.
- As these dogs are loosely owned and are left to roam around their surrounding areas, most of these dogs are considered as stray dogs. Under the current law and legislations, if a captured stray dog with/without microchip will be euthanized if the dog is unclaimed after a set period of time. However charges will be placed on owners if the dog is claimed.
- Most of the semi-stray dog's owners will not claim the dogs back because of the charges and penalty. They will, simply obtain other dogs or/and breed more dogs to compensate the lost.

### **B.3. Prevention of stray animal's production:**

Most stray animals originate from loosely owned animals, and usually an end result from long term neglect of these animals.

- Uncontrolled breeding: most owners lack knowledge and funding to desex their dogs. A single bitch may give birth to a litter of pups up to twice a year, and each litter may have up to 8-10 surviving puppies. Most of these pups are either being thrown away into rubbish tip, given away, surrendered to AFCD, or left in the open to fend for themselves. Most of these pups will perish, however the surviving pups usually will become strays and continue the reproductive cycle.
- The turnover rate of construction sites cargo yards, construction yards, and storage facility are usually very high, and most dogs in those areas are usually left by their owners as they leave the facilities.
- Dog owners abandon the pets on the streets and they may continue breeding.

### **C. Desexing of semi-stray / loosely owned animals –**

#### **A more practical and cost effective way to control stray animal numbers in long term:**

C.1. In the past years, AFCD have adopted trap and euthanasia as a mean of animal control. We believed that this method is inhumane and to control the stray population, we need to aim at the source of the problem; the loosely owned population. Setup local teams at high risk regions to educate locals to help promote desexing programs, communicate and provide help (trapping and logistics) to the owners.

Desexing the semi-stray dogs, not only result in controlling the no. of dogs in the areas, but also

- Reduce the no.of dogs roaming in the area to look for mating opportunities.
- Territorial aggressions associated with mating or guarding or pups will decline.
- Disturbances and noise related to reproduction will also decline.
- Request dog owners to help trap/capture loosely owned dogs to increase efficiency and help minimize risk of injuries and bites from captured animals.

### **D. TNR trial program should use number of dogs as a general guideline, not number of complaints.**

According to the AFCD report, a complainant made over 200 times of complaints to the dogs on Bremear Hill mountain. AFCD took action accordingly. Over 30 dogs were captured and removed. Another case, was that we were told by a villager, his dogs got caught by AFCD just because they barked at the hikers, just because they wanted to protect the owner and his properties.

These cases, showed that the complaints were not verified, of the nature and intention.

Without any effort or valid evidence, people may easily make complain to the AFCD. We are disappointed to see such policy is abused, and not able to improve the stray animal population.

#### **D.1. We suggest the government to**

- Educate local people on ways to improve pet ownership. Face-to-face discussion may be more effective for elderly and people with lower education levels.

- Provide desexing and assistance for the animals that are being complained.
- Try to understand the source of the complaint, rather than capturing the animal straight away upon receiving local complaints.

#### **E. Conclusion**

1. We strongly urge the government to implement and sponsor the TNR to stray dogs and also semi-stray dogs in the year of 2014.
2. Provide rabies vaccination to these TNR dogs.
3. Verify the nature and intention of the complaints and at the same time, educate the dog owner the proper ways of keeping dogs.

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**Animal Friends**

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