

The HKVA supports the amendments under CAP 139B proposed by the AFCD.

The veterinary profession sees the impact of many things on the welfare of animals and the direct consequences of the way Hong Kong's pet trade operates. Currently there is insufficient protection for the Hong Kong public and the pedigree puppies purchased by them. Infectious diseases can be seen in animals presented at veterinary clinics often resulting from being housed under poor welfare conditions. Puppies can be poorly fed increasing their likelihood of succumbing to disease and death.

Puppies have been seen suffering from abnormalities and deformities linked to poor breeding practices which may have lifelong consequences.

These animal welfare issues lead to human welfare issues owing to the emotional stress placed on pet owners should their pets pass away or should difficult life and death decisions need to be made. These issues occur across all species in the pet trade.

This is why the HKVA supports the proposed amendments which are long overdue and would be a valuable step in improving the practices of the dog trade. The licencing of all breeders closes loopholes and will put in place a system that regulates all breeders and requires them to meet certain standards. It will create a framework that should help improve transparency and give additional impetus to breeders to improve their breed planning and health screening.

There should be no further delay in implementing the amendments which would then allow work to start on better protecting the other species traded in Hong Kong.

A good legislative framework helps to underpin the fabric of society and guide behaviours in many aspects of life. This is why the HKVA also believes there can be further legislative efforts to assist with improving animal welfare.

The introduction of the "duty of care" concept that specifically protects animals – promoting their good welfare should be a key principle in all legislation that impacts on animals or regulates how we treat them. To that end the outdated

CAP 169 should be reviewed and improved or replaced by an Animal Welfare Ordinance.

However legislation alone will not be effective, there has to be political will and commitment. Policy support is required at all levels of Government and animal welfare considerations need to be mainstreamed throughout the different bureaus and departments.

The Housing Department's current policy and approach to keeping dogs in public housing can and does have a significant impact on animal welfare as it leads to dog abandonment.

Prospective tenants who already have pets face the choice of giving them up or illicitly keeping them after they move in.

The current restrictive policy should be changed to allow public housing tenants the option of keeping dogs.