

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS



18 January 2017

Mr Mathew Pereira
Forum Editor
The Straits Times

Dear Mr Pereira,

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) thanks Ms Stephanie Patricia Ngo for speaking up for animal welfare ("Raise awareness that chaining, caging dogs for long periods is cruel"; ST Forum, Jan 9).

The practice of chaining or caging dogs for long periods, is unfortunately common in Singapore. In the past five years, the SPCA has investigated approximately 130 cases annually. There are many more that go unreported.

Dogs require sufficient exercise to maintain their physical and mental health. Being confined to a small space, in a cage or otherwise, can lead to mental distress, causing unnecessary suffering.

Deprivation of exercise, stimulation and companionship can also lead to behavioural problems such as aggression or anxiety, which can have negative consequences for both animal and human.

The small space these animals are kept in, whether caged or tethered, can cause hygiene problems; the SPCA often finds these dogs sitting in, or near their own urine and faeces. This can be both a source of discomfort, as well as increase the risk of disease transmission to the animal, or its caregivers, due to the poor hygiene and general lack of cleanliness.

More often than not, in the course of our investigation into these cases, we find that the animals are being confined as a quick fix solution to a problem, often due to a lack of proper training. Some of the reasons for confinement cited by dog owners include the dog running out of the gate, digging up the garden, or that the animal is not toilet trained. Thankfully, these problems can be easily resolved with commitment on the part of the owner to train their animal. When our officers go out on a case they take time to investigate the reasons why the animal is being confined, whilst providing advice and working with owners to find solutions.

The SPCA will continue raising awareness on the harmful effects of caging and chaining through our education and advocacy programmes. Pet ownership comes with responsibilities, and the pledge that we will do the best by our animal companions. It's time we started doing better by "man's best friend."

Yours sincerely,

Jaipal Singh Gill (Dr)
Executive Director
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to AnimalsFo