

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

(In association with R.S.P.C.A. England) Patroness: LADY Y.P. McNEICE



1 July 2009

The Forum Editor,
Your Letters
Sunday Times

Dear Sir,

I refer to recent correspondence on the stray cat issue which debated various issues including sterilising of stray cats and lifting the Housing and Development Board (HDB) ban on cat ownership.

Stray cats that are sterilised are usually looked after and fed by caregivers in the neighbourhood, who have taken on this role in an effort to reduce the stray cat births.

The SPCA started its stray sterilisation voucher scheme in 1991 on a monthly basis, enabling members of the public who ballot successfully for a voucher, to take a stray cat they are feeding and caring for, to a participating veterinary clinic on our list, with SPCA absorbing the cost. Last year, the SPCA distributed 2,141 vouchers. Sterilisation we believe, is a far more humane and effective method to reduce the stray population.

With the long standing rule of cats not being permitted to be kept legally as licenced pets in Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats, the problem escalated in past decades because of uncontrolled breeding of the many homeless strays and owners who kept cats, but allowed them to breed/stray whilst not being held accountable. Decades of collecting and culling of cats by the authorities proved to be ineffective because it did not address the root cause of the problem – uncontrolled breeding of the cats remaining on the streets. Over the past 18 years though, with more organisations and members of the community getting involved, sterilisation has become a widely practised alternative to the burgeoning population increase that was evident previously.

The most promising sign that sterilisation does in fact work, is that the number of cats taken in by the society in recent years, has been steadily decreasing. In May we reached an all time low of 260 compared to over 500 per month when it was at its peak some years ago. This is also taking into consideration the ceasing of the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority's (AVA) Stray Cat Rehabilitation Scheme in 2003 during SARS. The SPCA would like to urge the Town Councils and the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) to consider bringing back this excellent programme that would help number of stray cats decrease at a faster pace and ultimately, help solve the dilemma we are facing today between animal welfare minded people and those who just want the strays removed and destroyed.

Stray cats are homeless, and many are probably descendants and victims of the abandonment process. They depend on human contact and food sources to survive. As long as the Housing and Development Board's rule on the prohibition of cats remains, the sterilisation of strays needs to be looked upon as the only effective long term solution in reducing the stray cat population.

The SPCA salutes all individuals and organisations who are helping the animals and taking ownership of the problem, despite the obstacles and limited resources. As much as we are encouraged by the latest statistics showing a gradual decline in the stray cat numbers, there is still much need for compassion, empathy and respect for all strays whilst applying the humane sentiment, to live and let live. *(paragraph not published)*

Yours sincerely,

Deirdre Moss (Ms)
Executive Officer