

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMAL



To: The Editor

(The following AWGs are signatories to this letter: Agency for Animal Welfare Action for Singapore Dogs, Animals' Concerns Research and Education Society, Animal Lovers' League, Cat Welfare Society, Causes for Animals, House Rabbit Society Singapore, Humane Society Singapore, Noah's Ark CARES, Save Our Street Dogs, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.)

We refer to the decision made by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) not to amend the definition of animals under the Road Traffic Act.

Under the Road Traffic Act (RTA), enacted on 1 January 1963, section 84(6) states that an "animal" is defined as "any horse, cattle, ass, mule, sheep, pig, goat or dog". The existing classification refers mainly to farm animals which is not at all relevant in today's context: the above animals (with the exception of the dog) are not owned by the general populace.

We see the need to widen the scope of "animal", in particular, to include cats which are popularly kept as pets today, and wildlife. While the current law is derived from societies where farm animals are protected, the policy, as applicable to an urban society, arises from a recognition that animals matter to humans or certainly to a significant part of our society.

We appeal to the MHA to reconsider amending the definition of "animal" under the RTA section 84(6) to make it consistent with the definition of "animal" in the Animals and Birds Act (ABA) section 2, so that it includes other animals such as cats, and wild animals which are potential victims of road accidents. The SPCA has noted an increased incidence of cats, in particular, reported as road accident casualties in recent years. The current legislation, as it stands now, is archaic. MHA has to contemporise the law to place significant value on community animals and wildlife that extends beyond utility.

We recognise MHA's concerns for the safety of the motorist concerned in stopping the vehicle after having hit an animal. But the dangers of stopping after an accident present themselves also when a mule (pig, sheep or goat) is hit. The law saw fit to place the value of a mule, as a farm animal, above this perceived risk, and thereby acknowledges the importance of motorists taking responsibility for their actions, by rendering assistance in hope that the animal's life could be saved, or at the very least the carcass be removed so that there be no continuing danger to other motorists.

We think this should be no different for cats and other wild animals that now thrive and flourish in Singapore.

Due to a heightened level of animal welfare consciousness in Singapore, expectations have risen in terms of rendering assistance to different species of animals in distress, whether pet, stray or wild animals. Today, two animal welfare organisations – the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and Animal Concerns, Research and Education Society (ACRES) - provide 24-hour emergency rescue operations, seven days a week, to aid animals involved in emergency situations, including traffic accidents, so the obligation to render assistance to any type of animal in need can be supported.

Amending Section 84(6) of the Road Traffic Act to align it with the Animals & Birds Act definition is timely and will make it more relevant, especially in relation to the types of animals that have been typically involved in road accidents today.

Finally, we appeal to the motorist who knocks down a straying animal to pull over at an appropriate safe spot to check on the animal and/or rush the animal to the nearest veterinary clinic for medical attention. Help can also be obtained for the animal, by contacting the SPCA at 62875355 ext 9, any day, any time, or ACRES' emergency rescue hotline at 97837782 for assistance, or the police for assistance. We urge motorists not to leave the casualty unattended in its trauma.

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This letter also carries the signatures of the following Animal Welfare Groups:

Agency for Animal Welfare
Action for Singapore Dogs
Animal Lovers' League
Cat Welfare Society
Causes for Animals
House Rabbit Society Singapore
Humane Society Singapore
Noah's Ark CARES
Save Our Street Dogs