

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

(In association with R.S.P.C.A. England)



25 September 2012

Dear Sirs,

I refer to the Opinion 'Let's talk about animal welfare' (September 14). The SPCA thanks Dr. Ho for highlighting the Animal Welfare Legislation Review which marks a milestone in the history of animal welfare in Singapore. The Society is hopeful that it will result in much improved legislation to protect animals against cruel acts including wanton neglect.

So long as there are economic factors affecting animal industries (whether factory farming or commercial breeding and sale of pets), it seems the welfare of the animals involved is often left out of the equation.

In New Zealand (which the writer made reference to), the SPCA does not have to go through the attorney general or public prosecutor to take perpetrators of animal cruelty to task legally, unlike the situation here in Singapore where no independent parties have the legal standing to seek action by the courts as stated in the article. This can prove a serious hurdle to action when there are differences of opinion between the Authority and the SPCA in terms of what constitutes a cruel act.

The SPCA supports Dr. Ho's suggestion to introduce codes of welfare here, as has been done in New Zealand. Currently, there is an ongoing review of their *Animal Welfare Act 1999* and there is indication that the codes of welfare New Zealand currently have, will be changed into regulations. The reason being that the codes are not directly enforceable (in particular the production animal codes - Layer hens, Pigs, Meat chickens) and thus, failing to meet the Minimum Standard under a code may not necessarily directly relate to an offence under their Act, making it difficult to prosecute for non-compliance of the minimum standard in the relevant code of welfare.

So we hope that if the authorities were to introduce codes of welfare here, the codes would make reference to specific offences under the relevant Act e.g. if a person, company or body corporate failed to meet a minimum standard within a Code of Welfare, they would breach the *Animals and Birds Act* and would be liable upon conviction to a fine or imprisonment.

Last December, the SPCA submitted a Proposal for Legislative Reform <http://spca-org-sg.earth.secure-xp.net/PDF/LegislativeReformfinal.pdf>. Included in it was a recommendation to consider a separate, stand-alone act i.e. an "Animal Welfare Act". The setting up of an independent Animal Welfare Advisory Committee was also suggested in our proposal (as is the case in New Zealand and Australia).

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Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals