

23 March 2011

Forum Editor
Straits Times Press

Dear Sir,

ANIMAL SMUGGLING – A CRUEL TRADE

I refer to the report “Animal smuggling on the rise” (S.T. 21 March). It announced an alarming increase in the number of animals that are smuggled into Singapore including a variety of prohibited species, from hedgehogs, to tortoises as well as pedigree dogs. The reported increase from 305 in 2008 to 1,511 last year, is indeed an eye-opener and shocking. The article brings to light the enormous scale of this illegal trade and it is evident that animal smugglers are making a mint, and think nothing of the risks involved. The geographic location of Singapore, and its accessibility, together with high overall consumer demand, make it a lucrative centre – for transshipment or local sales. The article also made reference to a previous case involving as many as 1200 birds.

One important factor that must not be forgotten or overlooked, is the cost to the animals themselves. There have been many cases highlighted here and overseas, where countless creatures suffer and die in the process, before they even reach their destinations. Birds packed tightly into narrow cylinders is just but one example – with many dying during the journey. Earlier this year, 16 pedigree puppies were reportedly crammed into the casing of speakers - situated in the boot of the multi-purpose vehicle - for their journey into Singapore from Malaysia, before being discovered by the authorities at Woodlands Checkpoint – two of the poodle pups later died whilst in quarantine.

It is a cruel trade that will be difficult to tackle, reduce or eradicate, unless there is willingness from consumers both locally and universally, to refrain from hankering after a cheap deal or from desiring to own a living being because of its novel appeal. Closer monitoring by the authorities and imposing deterrent sentences will also be needed to put a dent in the ever increasing animal smuggling numbers.

The SPCA would like take this opportunity to ask would-be pet owners to consider adoption of a pet from its shelter or from another animal welfare group. The public should research thoroughly and establish the source of a pet if they prefer to choose to buy one commercially. This will go a long way to helping alleviate the suffering of many animals exploited in one way or another in the illegal/commercial pet trade.

Yours sincerely,

Deirdre Moss (Ms)
Executive Director