

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS



12 April 2013

To the Editor:

I refer to letters to Today's online forum.

Ms Debbie Ng "*To be responsible, pet owners need help*," writes that more can be done with regard to education and stricter regulations. We couldn't agree more. The SPCA has long been at the forefront of education on responsible pet ownership, and we have for many years called for better enforcement of neglect, abuse, abandonment and all manner of crimes against animals.

In the letter "*Pet owners cannot continue with the status quo*" – we agree with Ms Florence Goh that owners are obliged to behave responsibly when in public with their pets, that is, keep their pets leashed at all times while on public areas, do their utmost not to let their pets soil public walkways, lamp posts, void decks, stairs with animal urine and faeces.

In "*Pooch problems? All play a part*", Ms Lulu Chia is right to say that pet owners must play their part in maintaining social harmony, while cyclists, pedestrians, road users must be tolerant to all who share public spaces.

All three contributors have more or less summed up the malaise that is happening within our communities; it cannot be an attitude of 'us versus them'; the problems aren't confined to one group only, and the sooner every Singaporean recognises the need for collective action, the better for all.

It is clear that more education needs to be done at the point of sale. The SPCA had as late as 2008, suggested to the AVA to make it a requirement that pet shops/pet farms screen videos of pet care and the responsibilities, at their locations, so that interested parties can see what it entails to own a dog. Various aspects of dog ownership in particular could be covered such as healthcare, exercise and training, house training.

The SPCA receives many reports of dogs being subjected to constant confinement because owners are not willing to socialize, exercise or train them; we strongly believe education will not only help the animals, but will help prevent social problems which affect society across different levels. The SPCA, aside from counseling when people want to adopt a pet, also offers dog care seminars. We are hoping that more people and organizations will come forward to learn first hand from behavior experts and veterinarians and ourselves on the various responsibilities involved.

It is the shared responsibility of pet owners, animal lovers, animal activists, community stray feeders to behave in ways that do not create unnecessary tension and acrimony with non pet-owners and people who have genuine fear or dislike of animals. We seek greater understanding and tolerance from those who do not own pets.

The SPCA applauds the Animal Welfare Legislative Review Committee ("AWLRC") for submitting a total of 24 recommendations covering a broad spectrum of animal welfare related issues ranging from increasing punitive fines and jail terms, to accreditation for breeders, pet shops and ancillary pet services, and to developing better community relations amongst pet owners and the community to share responsibility to improve awareness of animal welfare.

We all need to get along.

Corinne Fong
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