



**SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE OPENING OF AVA'S RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP
ROADSHOW 2006,
30 SEP 2006, Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza**

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. I am glad to be able to join you today at AVA's Responsible Pet Ownership Roadshow 2006.

Introduction

2 All of us here know the joy that pets can bring to us, whether it is through play with our children, or companionship for our seniors, or through helping people with disabilities. In Singapore, over 44,000 homes know the joy of keeping a dog, and many others who love their cats, rabbits and hamsters. They have benefited from hours of pleasure and companionship provided by the furry members of their households.

3 As we appreciate our pets, we have to remember that owning a pet takes responsibility and commitment for the entire lifetime of the animals. Different animals have different characteristics and needs for care. Having good knowledge of the animal and understanding of the care required before buying a particular pet is something we have to do as responsible pet owners.

4 With this in mind, AVA has put in place the Responsible Pet Ownership programme, as an initiative to promote animal welfare and reduce pet abandonment. We have been relentlessly pursuing our goal of responsible pet ownership, particularly with our schools and our community, over the last 5 years.

Responsible Pet Ownership 2006

5 This year, AVA has chosen the theme – “*Don't get pets on impulse*”. A simple yet important message.

6 The adorable charm of pets can lead some of us to make hasty decisions, and purchase them on impulse. Owning a pet is a long-term commitment. We need to give due consideration as to whether we have the time and resources to take good care of the pet throughout its life.

7 While some pets do find a loving home that are providing good care, others are sadly abandoned when the novelty wears out. This practice has contributed to the rise in our stray animal population.

8 Abandoned animals have to fend for themselves in the open, often becoming aggressive and cause public nuisances. Worse, they may become diseases borne and cause public health concerns. Pet abandonment is an act of animal cruelty and is strongly discouraged.

New Initiatives for Schools

9 To clearly deliver the message of responsible pet ownership to our children, who tend to be the ones attracted by the cuteness of the animals, AVA is rolling out new initiatives to the schools. For instance, AVA will be making a 'Responsible Pet Pal Kit' available to all primary schools. This kit comprises a teacher's manual, video, and other reference materials, to guide teachers in implementing various activities. AVA is also encouraging secondary schools to put up skits on responsible pet ownership at school events, and will facilitate by providing scripts and costumes.

10 AVA has also introduced a Responsible Pet Ownership School Ambassador Scheme, to encourage teachers to play a key role in inculcating responsible pet ownership in students. Nominated teacher ambassadors will work with AVA to implement responsible pet ownership initiatives within their schools.

Pet Shop Grading Scheme

11 Besides working with schools and the community, AVA also has plans to work with the pet shops. As retailers in the pet industry, we expect them to be exemplary in the care giving of animals in their shops. Pet shop owners must ensure that animal welfare is not compromised as they manage the animals within the confines of their retail space. In pet shops, animals must be kept suitably and given the required veterinary care.

12 To uplift the standards of pet shops, AVA will soon be implementing a grading scheme for pet shops. Under this scheme, pet shops will be graded according to their level of compliance with AVA's licensing conditions, as well as on their adoption of industry's best practices.

13 With this grading scheme, I hope that pet shops will be motivated to upgrade their standards. Discerning customers will be happy to patronise pet shops that maintain a high standard of animal care. AVA will announce the details of the scheme in due course.

Conclusion

14 We must play our part in raising the standard of animal welfare in Singapore. I am heartened to see many animal welfare organizations participating in today's roadshow. They have been our partners in creating greater awareness on responsible pet ownership, and have made considerable contribution in promoting animal welfare standards. The support has made a difference, and I urge them to continue to work closely with AVA.

15 With the Government, industry and community working hand-in-hand, I am confident that we can forge a harmonious co-existence between our people and our pets.

16 It is now my pleasure to declare the Responsible Pet Ownership Roadshow 2006 open. I wish you all a wonderful morning. Thank you.

**Issued by Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority
Ministry of National Development
on 30 September 2006**
