



CULLING OF STRAY CATS

1 There are an estimated 80,000 stray cats in Singapore. A single mating pair of cats can produce up to 324 progeny in about two years. In addition, abandonment of pet cats by irresponsible owners has compounded the problem further. Culling is routinely carried out to keep the stray population under control. Unfortunately, the AVA and SPCA have had to put down about 10,000 to 13,000 stray cats per year.

2 A large stray animal population causes public health, environmental and nuisance problems. Stray cats scavenge for food, defaecate and urinate in public places, and stray into homes. In addition, unsterilized stray cats caterwaul, causing noise nuisance.

Stray Cat Rehabilitation Scheme

3 In 1998, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) (then PPD) initiated the Stray Cat Rehabilitation Scheme. The Scheme encourages dedicated volunteers to work with Town Councils to control the stray cat population through sterilization and responsible management of the cats. The volunteers are expected to manage the cats properly to ensure that there is a limited number, they do not cause a nuisance to the community and that the environment is kept clean. To date, 16 Town Councils and several private estates have adopted this Scheme. AVA estimates that there are 10,000 sterilized stray cats in Singapore.

4 However the Scheme is not working well, and AVA has received an increased number of complaints related to stray cats, including those under the Scheme. In view of this, the Scheme has been suspended pending further review, and consultation with stakeholders.

Improving Public Hygiene

5 As part of the Singapore's OK campaign to clean up the environment and improve public hygiene, AVA, NEA, and Town Councils have been working to improve public hygiene in markets, hawker centers and food establishments. This includes intensified clearing of stray animals (cats and dogs) and vermin (rats and cockroaches) from such places.

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6 Food establishments should not have any stray animals and vermin for public health reasons. In the environment of a hawker centre or eating establishment, vermin and strays are more likely to come into close contact with people and food. These creatures can carry germs that people may pick up from bites and scratches, or from food, utensils and surfaces that have been contaminated by the vermin and stray animals.

7 The Town Councils have been advised to focus their culling efforts on the 70,000 stray cats outside the Scheme, and avoid removing the sterilized stray cats unless they have become a nuisance or inhabit food establishments. To date, out of the 422 cats rounded up this month, only 8 are sterilized cats.

Education on responsible pet ownership

8 In the long run, the stray animal problem can only be solved by responsible human behaviour. Pets should be immunized, sterilized and properly looked after. Owners should ensure that their pets do not soil the environment, especially public areas. Food should not be left lying around to be scavenged by strays. AVA will promote public education in these matters in collaboration with the various animal welfare organizations. AVA will also work with animal welfare groups to identify other long-term sustainable solutions to control the problem of strays. Through such efforts, we hope to minimize the need to cull unwanted animals in the future.

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