

[Reply] AVA working to improve facility

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We thank Mr Marc Ha Tzen Wye and Mr Darren Chan Keng Leong for their letters on The Animal Lodge (Work with shelters to get The Animal Lodge fit for purpose and Help animal shelters cope with cost, respectively; both published on July 4).

The Animal Lodge was built to provide an option for those affected by land leases expiring at Loyang, Seletar and Lim Chu Kang.

The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) has been engaging animal welfare groups (AWGs) throughout the design and construction of this animal shelter as well as during this transition

process. Where possible, we have taken in the feedback from them.

For instance, we redesigned the space for communal kennels when we were told that the original individual kennel layout was unsuitable. Some units were built differently based on common requests.

We have also assisted AWGs and shelters financially by charging rental rates at cost-recovery, waiving the rental security deposit and providing a rent-free period and a one-off relocation assistance package of \$7,500 per unit to help them in their transition to the new premises.

This worked out to between \$15,000 and \$37,500 for AWGs, which took up between two to five units in general.

We have also been working with stakeholders on solutions to the concerns that have been raised.

For instance, we removed waste found to be causing the blocked pipes, which Mr Ha mentioned in his letter, and took steps to reduce its recurrence.

AVA is investigating the cause.

We would like to assure the writers that AVA will continue to work closely with AWGs and animal shelters on their concerns.

Chang Siow Foong (Dr)

Group Director

Agri Establishment Regulation Group

Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority

ST Online, 11 July 2018

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Original forum letters

Work with shelters to get The Animal Lodge fit for purpose

The animal welfare groups (AWGs) and rescuers housed with Mutts & Mittens boarding kennel are glad that the challenges faced by animal shelters have been highlighted ([New home, higher costs for animal shelters](#); June 30).

It has been an extremely stressful period for those impacted by the move to The Animal Lodge in Sungei Tengah.

Despite ample feedback and consultation with the AWGs and shelters, as well as renovations the AWGs have done and paid for out of pocket, the Sungei Tengah facility remains unfit for purpose.

For example, the shelter where Mutts & Mittens boards our animals encountered blocked pipes within weeks of moving in.

Additionally, the walls are not dog proof, and some dogs have been chewing the walls out of boredom or stress and ingesting the foam insulation.

The meshing on the windows is also not weather-proof and rain splashes into the kennels.

There is a raft of other issues that is costing significant money to fix.

We believe that the Government's decision to build The Animal Lodge came from a place of good intentions. Staying true to that intention, is it not a reasonable expectation that these abandoned and stray animals have a safe and comfortable place to live?

We do not know the constraints the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority faces, but suspect it has had to operate on very tight budgets due to a need to recover costs.

Here lies the conundrum - is the low build quality the result of the AWGs and shelters' inability to pay high rentals?

If so, then we really need to question the underlying costing principles. Is a cost recovery objective even tenable, given that some of the shelters and AWGs previously operated on rent-free premises?

We strongly urge the AVA to reconsider and to make the necessary rectifications so that all the buildings will be fit for purpose, and provide a sustainable solution for the AWGs and the shelters.

Reasonable animal welfare should be the key guiding principle. Have we provided a healthy and safe environment for the animals? Not in its present state.

We hope the AVA will listen to the feedback from the AWGs and shelters, as they have the operational experience to know what is required.

Marc Ha Tzen Wye

Help animal shelters to cope with costs

I read with concern that moving to a new home is giving animal shelters more of a financial burden ([New home, higher costs for animal shelters](#); June 30).

It is unacceptable that the shelters have to fork out so much of their own funds to do renovations.

These shelters provide an invaluable service to care for animals that are abandoned, abused or neglected, and they sacrifice a lot to provide for these animals' medical assistance and upkeep.

The new buildings should have been made fit for purpose before the move.

I hope the authorities understand the large responsibility and overhead costs that the shelters are facing, and will increase the grants or waive rental and renovation costs.

They should also step in to rectify the issues the shelters are facing.

Animal shelters must be given priority on these waivers and space allocation, ahead of commercial enterprises such as pet breeders and importers.

This is to send a strong and clear message to the public to choose to adopt a rescued animal rather than buy from pet shops or breeders.

It is disappointing to see so many shelters struggling.

I urge the Government to do more and reach out to them with a strong support framework that will increase awareness of the good work they are doing.

Darren Chan Keng Leong