

‘Dog abuse’ duo let off with stern warning

■ BY JALELAH ABU BAKER

TWO owners of a small brown dog, shown being beaten on a video clip circulated widely online, have been let off with a stern warning.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA), which conducted a nine-day investigation into animal abuse allegations, said it found the dog “healthy and in good condition”, and that its owners had “no ill intention to hurt their pet dog while attempting to discipline it”.

It said this case was different from one of animal cruelty, which involves deliberate intent to inflict harm and severe pain on an animal.

It noted that the dog’s owners had voluntarily submitted themselves to the investigation, and that despite the beating, the dog, named Butters, was seen “relating positively” to them.

A man who is believed to have filmed and uploaded the clip on video-sharing site YouTube called the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)

to admit his involvement in the video on July 14, three days after the SPCA put out an appeal for information.

By then, netizens who had seen the clip were expressing outrage and calling for the anonymous dog-beater to be caught and punished.

The AVA declined to identify the cameraman.

In the video which is still making its rounds online, Butters, believed to be a poodle-terrier mix, is whacked repeatedly with what looks like a broom.

Investigations showed that the “broom” was in fact a bundled bunch of soft canes normally used for back massages, said the AVA.

Mr Ricky Yeo, president of Action for Singapore Dogs (ASD), said that what AVA had done was correct and prudent, but it could have gone a step further: “AVA should also advise them and send officers to teach them how to handle such behaviour from their dog in future.”

He added that while the video made him cringe, it is common for Singaporeans to train their dogs through beating, or

by screaming and shouting at them.

“Such treatment does not make sense to dogs because they forget what they’ve done 30 seconds later. You should catch them in the act,” he said.

He added that repeated beating will make a dog nervous and aggressive: “The next time somebody raises his or her arm, it will bite first to defend itself because it does not want to experience pain for no reason.”

Ms Dierdre Moss of the SPCA said the society had recommended that a fine be imposed and the dog be put through a mandatory obedience course, which will also teach its owners how to handle their pet.

She said: “We are extremely disappointed with the outcome and will be appealing to the AVA to review its decision.”

The AVA said it will conduct as many follow-up visits as needed to check on the dog.

An individual convicted of animal cruelty can be fined up to \$10,000 and/or be jailed up to a year.