

SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

(In association with R.S.P.C.A. England) Patroness: LADY Y.P. McNEICE



28 July 2009

Forum Editor
Straits Times
Forum Page

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to the letter by Jeanne Nicole Chan "Trapping and dumping strays and pets unbecoming in gracious Singapore" (25 July) in which she asked, "Is there really no way to strive for a 'no kill' shelter?"

The reasons the SPCA euthanases include terminal illness or injury where there is no possibility of recovery, behavioural problems that pose a threat to other animals or humans, stray overpopulation, disease transmission, and old age where the quality of life is impaired by major loss of functions. Sadly, this includes the lack of shelter space which results in shelter overcrowding. Overcrowding threatens the lives of all the animals in our care due to stress, weakened immune systems and increased risk of disease transmission. This requires the SPCA to make difficult decisions about euthanasia based on health, physical, emotional and psychological suffering, and the best interests of the animals receiving care at the shelter.

While some individuals argue that a shelter can easily achieve "no-kill" by refusing to accept surplus animals once it is full, one needs to understand that the consequence of such a move could result in an increase in abandonment of animals on the street, or the animal is given up to another shelter or organisation if they have room to take one more. There begs the question: does the SPCA refuse to accept animals and refer them elsewhere so it can achieve a "no-kill" label? This no doubt would cause people to question as to why the SPCA is then abandoning its responsibility to provide shelter (even if is temporary due to our adoption selection process) to unwanted strays and pets.

To put things into perspective, the SPCA receives 22 or more animals daily (which include those that may be chronically old/sick or injured). This means an average of 600 animals taken in a month, and over 7,000 animals in a year. With only 1,100 being adopted on a yearly basis, the SPCA cannot possibly find homes fast enough for all the animals that come through its doors.

Over the years, the SPCA has moved from blind acceptance to counselling. This includes education on responsible ownership to understanding reasons for giving up the animal to encouraging people to re-home their pets. In most cases though, despite our efforts, we end up taking in the animal and bearing the burden of having to decide the animal's fate.

We dream of the ideal where we do not have to put animals down because they are part of a surplus, and while the SPCA hopes to put into effect this policy someday, it will only be able to realise this vision with the help of a society that respects animals and treats them humanely.

Yours sincerely,

Deirdre Moss
Executive Officer