



## 2008 Year End Reflections by Deirdre Moss

Each year seems to get busier and busier at the SPCA and time seems to fly faster. Before you know it, the days are over and a fresh lot of work lies ahead. As I look back over the year, I am thankful that there are so many people involved and helping the SPCA - Management Committee, staff, volunteers, members, donors and friends who help the animals - we have a lot to be positive about. It is what keeps one motivated, as many hands are needed to help the Society progress.

In addition to all our usual tasks such as emergency rescue, cruelty investigation, running a shelter (that takes in 700 unwanted animals every month), educational talks in schools, adoption, sterilisation of strays, lost and found service, 2008 saw a string of SPCA's firsts.

To begin with, the SPCA unveiled a new look for its website. Designed by FurryFish, the website is packed with more information on animal welfare and pet care. The SPCA also participated in Singapore's first Animal Welfare Symposium on 24-May 2008. Chaired by our very own, Inspector Jaipal Gill, the symposium addressed existing laws on cruelty to animals, product testing and the illegal trade of wildlife. The SPCA also forged further into animal activism by voicing its opinion against the import of whale sharks by Resorts World Sentosa. A limited edition whale shark shirt was specially designed and the SPCA continued its education efforts on the whale shark cause at "Paws at the Beach" - an event to commemorate World Animal Day (4 October).

SPCA also joined the social networking race with our very own SPCA Group on Facebook with a current strength of 880 members. Other activities that had us busy were the pet care seminars, the launch of our New Building sub-committee, SPCA Fun Run, Flag Day, the Furry Friends Fund and a tie-up with Yahoo! Answers.

Reflecting on the number of animals that we continue to take in, I am heartened to report that the number of cats has declined - where we used to receive over 500 (mainly stray cats) on average per month in previous years, we now receive around 300 per month. However much can still be done to further reduce this figure. One way you can help is to ensure that strays and your pets are sterilised. This year, the SPCA distributed 2,114 vouchers, enabling volunteers to have a stray cat sterilised at participating private veterinary clinics, with SPCA paying the cost.

Aside from the 300 cats and kittens, the SPCA takes in another 400 dogs and other animals every month. Pedigree dogs have been on the rise, making up around 50 percent of the total number of dogs taken in - on average we receive 250 dogs per month with close to half, being pedigree. Many are found on the street by the public and not claimed despite our efforts to find their owners. Other pets are given up when owners no longer have the time to care for their pets. We can only conclude that impulse buying is common with these new owners who are not aware of the responsibilities involved in this life-time commitment.

From January to November, we investigated a total of 708 cases of alleged animal abuse. About a third of these involved dogs that were tied up or caged for hours. Despite SPCA's efforts to educate the owners on how to improve conditions for their pets, there are still a considerable number that do not follow our advice.

I must mention our Animal Handling Officers who most times go beyond the call of duty and are busy with countless rescues ranging from dogs in canals, road accident victims, and cats stranded in high places. Our staff sometimes had to put themselves at great risk to save the animals. The animals rescued in 2008 include a White-Bellied Sea Eagle and a pangolin rescued from a drain in Yishun.

As we approach year end, 2009 will bring with it new efforts to help the animals. There are exciting things planned for youth, and a couple of major media campaigns planned. We will continue to spread the message that the whale sharks do not belong in captivity. A major concern in 2009 will be to acquire land for our new building, as we will have to vacate our current premises at Mount Vernon by October 2012. We are behind schedule, and are awaiting news from the authorities on whether our intended plot has been approved, failing which we will have to source for a new plot from the choices offered. The SPCA has reserves from years of accumulative saving and prudent management, but much fundraising will need to be done to meet the cost of the rental of the land, and a new purpose built premises. This no doubt will be an uphill task in the present economic climate.

Amidst all the new challenges and tasks, we stay grounded to our objective to promote kindness and prevent cruelty to animals. As always, we look forward to your continued support, generosity and encouragement as we work for the betterment of our furry friends.

Sincerely,  
Deirdre Moss  
Executive Officer