

17 March 2014

To:

Minister of Defence (MINDEF): Dr Ng Eng Hen

Minister of National Development (MND): Mr Khaw Boon Wan

cc.

Minister of State (Defence, National Development)

Mr. Mohamad Maliki bin Osman

Minister of State (National Development)

Mr. Desmond Lee

Collective appeal to review the case of alleged animal abuse in Pasir Ris Camp

Background

1. On 14 January 2014, a full-time National Serviceman (NSF) witnessed two incidents of alleged animal abuse against stray dogs in his camp by his senior officers - a Lieutenant Colonel and a Warrant Officer. He was emotionally affected by the actions of his officers - what he believed to be animal abuse. He urgently sent a video clip of one of these dogs shown to be tied up in a questionable manner, to a local Animal Welfare Group, the Animal Lovers League (ALL) in a bid to seek help for the captured dog.
2. The Agriculture and Veterinary Authority (AVA) conducted a preliminary examination and announced that there were no signs of animal abuse without providing details of the process of the said examination, leaving the public to doubt if psychological abuse was considered. The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) stated that it would conduct an investigation into the matter and does not condone animal abuse by its soldiers. Meanwhile, four of the five dogs have been rescued and placed under the care of ALL, but the whereabouts of the fifth remains unknown.
3. Both a parent (of the serviceman that has been punished), as well as the representative from ALL, raised concerns about the investigation process, where the anonymity of the complainant was not only unprotected, but exposed by the investigators,

compromising his status in his camp. It was reported that MINDEF claimed that the parent's account of promises by SAF was "unfounded.

We, the undersigned AWGs, appeal for the following recommendations to be considered:

A. Redefining the parameters of animal abuse.

a. According to Section 42(1)(e) of the Animals and Birds Act:

"Any person who causes, procures or, being the owner, permits to be confined, conveyed, lifted or carried any animal in such a manner or position as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering; shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both; except where an owner is convicted of having permitted cruelty to an animal under subsection (2), he shall be liable to a fine not exceeding \$10,000."

We opine that the conduct of the assessment of the definition of "unnecessary pain or suffering" has negated the psychological distress that the video-graphed dog was subjected to, under the hands of the officers involved. We opine that the dog was wrongly confined and suffered much psychological distress and ask AVA to review the findings of the examination with the collective AWGs for readmission of evidence to the SAF.

B. Inclusion of relevant AWG(s) into animal abuse investigation process: It is proposed that a special investigation committee be formed for every case of animal abuse, starting with this case. The committee should include representatives from both the AVA and a recognized AWG. In this particular case, both ALL and SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals) are availing themselves to assist to be part of the investigation panel.

C. Invitation of AWGs on the early management of animals in SAF camp complexes: One issue that was raised in this Pasir Ris Camp case, was the reported increase in the number of cases of dog attacks by its personnel. We noticed that this camp had chosen to suffer one alleged dog bite attack after another until the reported 5th report, before choosing to take action. Had the camp officers made an immediate call for help to AWGs like ALL or ASD or SOSD after the first incident, the subsequent incidents would not have occurred. We recommend that the SAF considers the adoption of new stray management protocol that includes humane handling of animals deemed to be of threat to camp safety, with AWG assistance to

avoid causing unnecessary distress to NSFs witnessing officers treating animals in an untrained, allegedly inhumane manner.

Without question, the AWGs have a deep regard for Singapore's authorities and the SAF. This particular incident, however, could have been better handled. It is our hope that the AVA and SAF will consider our appeal and recommendations. Thank you.

Agency for Animal Welfare Limited (AWW)

Animals Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES)

Animal Lovers League (ALL)

Action for Singapore Dogs (ASD)

Cat Welfare Society (CWS)

Causes for Animals (CWS)

Exclusively Mongrels Ltd (EM)

House Rabbit Society Singapore (HRSS)

Save our Street Dogs (SOSD)

Society for the Prevention of Animal Cruelty (SPCA)