

AFCD urges public to think carefully before releasing animals

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (May 25) reminded members of the public to think carefully before participating in mercy releases of animals.

A spokesman for the AFCD said, "Some members of the public have engaged themselves in mercy release activities which involve releasing of animals in recent years. However, releasing animals improperly, including releasing them into an unsuitable habitat, may affect their survival. In addition, if exotic species or species that are incompatible with the local ecology are released, they may compete with native species for resources and adversely affect the local ecology. Therefore, the Government does not encourage the public to release animals."

The AFCD inspects places where animal releasing activities are likely to take place at appropriate times, and carries out publicity and education work.

Under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169), it is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to animals by releasing them improperly. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for three years upon conviction.

The spokesman reiterated that to safeguard animal welfare, members of the public must think carefully before participating in animal release activities and may also consider other options such as planting trees or participating in volunteer services with animal welfare groups and environmental protection organisations in lieu of animal release.