

Public views invited for proposals to enhance animal welfare in Hong Kong

The Government launched a three-month public consultation on the proposals for enhancing animal welfare today (April 26). Public views are welcomed.

A spokesperson for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said, "We attach great importance to animal welfare. In recent years, there has been a growing concern about issues related to animal welfare in society. Pet owners and animal welfare organisations expect the Government to review relevant legislation to not only minimise the chance of causing any unnecessary suffering to animals, but also to require persons responsible for animals to take positive steps to provide for their welfare needs, as well as to enhance the deterrent effect."

With reference to the relevant legislation and experience of overseas places and having taken into account views of animal welfare organisations, the general public and Legislative Council members, the Government, through amending the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169), proposes to extend the existing legislation which prohibits and penalises acts of cruelty to animals to include taking positive actions on looking after animals well. The AFCD and animal welfare organisations will step up public education to enhance animal welfare.

The proposals include:

1. To introduce a positive "duty of care"

The AFCD proposes to impose a positive "duty of care" on persons responsible for animals to look after their animals well, empower a public officer to issue an improvement notice to persons where the duty of care has not been fulfilled, and set an appropriate level of penalty for the contravention of the duty of care;

2. To enhance the provisions for prevention of cruelty

The AFCD proposes to increase the maximum penalty for animal cruelty offences and empower the courts to disqualify a person convicted of an animal cruelty offence from keeping animals within a specified period of time or permanently; and

3. To enhance enforcement powers for safeguarding animal welfare

The AFCD proposes to provide public officers with the necessary powers of entry to premises and seizure of animals with a view to enhancing the protection of animals from unnecessary suffering.

Members of the public can download the consultation paper from the AFCD's dedicated website on public consultation(www.pets.gov.hk/english/animal_health_and_welfare/Proposals_to_Enhance_Animal_Welfare.html), the Food and Health Bureau's website (www.fhb.gov.hk) and the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/en/residents/government/publication/consultation/current.htm). The public can also reserve a seat at the four public forums held by the AFCD. Information on the forums is available at the above dedicated websites.

Views on the consultation paper should be sent by post to the Office of the Animal Management (Development) Division, AFCD, 5/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Hong Kong, by fax to 3110 1336, or by email to cap169_amendment@afcd.gov.hk on or before July 31 this year.