

**SOCIETY FOR THE
PREVENTION OF
CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
(HONG KONG)**

**POLICY DOCUMENT
ANIMAL WELFARE**

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INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIETY AND ITS WORK

The SPCA is a registered Hong Kong charity whose remit is actively to pursue the cause of animal welfare primarily in Hong Kong but also in the rest of China and the region.

Our mission is to promote kindness to animals, to protect their health and welfare, to prevent cruelty and, through example and education, to inspire in the community a deep respect for life so that all sentient animals may live together in harmony.

The Society is run by its members through an Executive Committee elected by members. It is supported by the operation of veterinary clinics and boarding facilities as well as by fund-raising activities, donations and membership fees, retail sales, grooming and courses. It receives less than 5 per cent of its funding as a direct government subvention.

The Society's spheres of activity are as follows:

- The SPCA works on a 24-hour basis to help distressed, injured or abandoned domestic and wild animals through the efforts of its veterinary welfare staff and volunteers.
- The SPCA acts to enforce the laws relating to animal welfare, investigating alleged cases of cruelty through its inspectorate with the back-up of the veterinary department.
- The SPCA has an extensive homing department that attempts to place as many animals as possible into caring homes.
- The SPCA runs a modern companion-animal veterinary facility that strives to provide the highest standard of care.
- The SPCA strives through desexing and other campaigns to bring about a zero surplus situation where all companion animals have a good home.
- The SPCA campaigns in Hong Kong and the region to achieve legal and social reform in animal welfare.
- The SPCA is actively involved in humane educational work in Hong Kong and the region.
- The SPCA publishes an annual report detailing the statistics of the number of investigations undertaken, prosecutions completed, enquiries dealt with, and the numbers of animals treated, rescued, homed, referred to government stray control, or otherwise helped.

Our history dates back to 1903, but the Society only became active in 1921 when it was re-established with Governor Sir R.E. Stubbs as president and patron. Its first fund-raising event, a fancy dress ball, was held at City Hall in 1922, and a dogs home was opened in Waterloo Road the next year with funding from Lady Ho Tung.

In 1934, a new enlarged dogs home opened in Tam Kung Road, Kowloon City, funded by Sir Robert and Lady Ho Tung. The Society re-formed in 1950 after World War II, and in 1953 an office was built in Central with funds from the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club. In 1964 its Dorothy McGregor Animal Clinic opened in Harcourt Road. Three years later a Kowloon Centre and Clinic opened with funds from the Jockey Club. In 1978 the Society was formally recognised as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Hong Kong (RSPCA HK).

In 1983 the Lenore Nell Winfield Clinic opened on Cheung Chau, and Centre and Clinic also opened in Sai Kung. In 1987 a mobile clinic started in the New Territories. In 1992 the Jockey Club Pamela D. Barton Animal Welfare Centre opened in Wanchai. The building was funded by the Jockey Club with additional contributions from private donors. In 1997 the Society was re-named the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong).

Redevelopment of the Kowloon Centre began in 1999 and was completed in 2001. Again the new facility was funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club and private donations.

The policies herein set out the general principles of the SPCA's view of how animals should be treated. They are intended to provide guidelines for further action and to encourage a compassionate attitude towards animals.

The policies will be kept under review by the Executive Committee at all times.

Explanatory note: The use of the word 'animal' is a generic one covering all sentient animals.

1. COMPANION ANIMALS

1.1 Responsible guardianship

Explanatory note: The term guardian is preferred because the term owner implies that animals are goods and chattels without independent existence.

1.1.1 The SPCA encourages the keeping of companion animals by those who have the facilities, time, financial means and level of interest necessary to ensure a satisfactory standard of care for, and a long term commitment to, their animals.

Note: Facilities in some homes are unsuitable for the keeping of certain animals and personal circumstances could make adequate provision for companion animals difficult if not impossible.

1.1.2 The Society is opposed to any degree of confinement which is likely to cause distress or suffering to the animals concerned.

Note: It is a matter of particular concern that many birds and small mammals are kept in cages that are too small and barren for the species concerned.

1.2 Acquiring an animal

1.2.1 The SPCA advocates that, if acquired, all animals should be acquired from the place where they were born or from an SPCA animal centre (or other reputable rescue organisation).

Note: The display of animals in pet shops and pet stalls can lead to impulse acquisition without proper regard for the responsibilities of animal guardianship. Exotic animals such as snakes, lizards and terrapins are difficult to look after and will rarely be provided with adequate facilities.

1.3 Trade in companion animals

1.3.1 Given the number of companion animals that are destroyed each year, the SPCA disapproves of trading in such animals.

1.4 Transport

1.4.1 The SPCA believes that the transport of unsupervised animals should be avoided wherever possible. In order to protect the welfare of animals in transit, they should be in good health and transported in suitable containers. No animals should be transported in a way that is likely to cause suffering. Further, animals should not be transported in the last third of a pregnancy. All journeys should be as short as possible in terms of time and distance.

1.5 Population control

1.5.1 The SPCA advocates the neutering of domestic cats and dogs and other domestic animals as an important part of responsible guardianship.

Explanatory note: Using modern anaesthetic techniques, surgical neutering is a safe and effective way to prevent unwanted breeding of dogs and cats (British Veterinary Association statement, May 1990). It is not necessary, for behavioural or medical reasons, to allow females to have a litter prior to surgery. Veterinary surgeons can advise on the most appropriate timing and overall suitability of any operation for individual animals. Hormonal control methods are available for female dogs and cats,

but prolonged use may carry the risk of unwanted side effects and there are sometimes practical difficulties regarding dosage and timing of administration.

1.5.2 With the current situation the Society is opposed to the breeding of companion animals both privately and commercially.

1.5.3 While there are breeding establishments still in existence, they should be closely monitored.

1.6 Animal registration

1.6.1 The SPCA is convinced that a properly financed and organised scheme to control unwanted and stray animals is the government's responsibility and should include provisions for the identification and registration of dogs. The SPCA recommends the registration and identification of other companion animals to encourage responsible guardianship. The Society also recommends the establishment of a central registry for companion animals for this purpose.

1.6.2 Legislation

1.6.2.1 Dog licensing is required by law. If an animal has not been desexed there should be a significant licence fee – significantly higher than the cost of desexing. Desexed dogs should be licensed without charge or for a small fee. Initial proof of desexing would be by veterinary surgeon's certificate.

The Society strongly supports legislation that encourages desexing of apprehended unlicensed dogs if reclaimed.

1.6.2.2 All imported cats and dogs should be fully immunised and at least 14 weeks old. The import licence fee for dogs that have not been desexed should be significantly higher than for desexed animals. Imported animals should be identifiable by microchip, preferably inserted in their country of origin.

1.6.2.3 A licence should be required for breeding of all kinds of animals. Illegally bred animals offered for sale should be confiscated and the keeper heavily fined.

1.6.2.4 Regulations governing pet shop licences should be very stringent and the fees significant. The selling of animals in pet shops should be phased out (the shops can make their profits by selling pet-related products and charging a handling fee for adoptions of SPCA animals).

1.6.2.5 The SPCA believes there should be a government-funded, high-quality district-based animal warden service with responsibility for compliance, enforcement action and control, and to carry out stray animal control and education of animal guardians. This should be phased in gradually to replace the current government dog-catching service.

1.7 Trap, neuter, return (TNR)

1.7.1 The SPCA calls for the introduction of trap, neuter, return as a humane means of controlling stray populations. The Society recognises that TNR constitutes a humane means of controlling stray populations and supports development of this and other methods of humane control.

1.8 Anatomical alteration

1.8.1 The SPCA is opposed to alteration by surgery or other means for purposes other than the benefit of the animal or the animal population as a whole. Where surgical correction of a condition that may be hereditary is performed, the SPCA requires that the animal be desexed at the same time.

1.9 Quarantine

1.9.1 The Society welcomes the controlled entry into any territory, without quarantine, of companion dogs and cats from territories recognised by the World Health Organisation as being free from rabies in those species. It supports the imposition of quarantine for dogs and cats imported from territories which do not satisfy this criterion.

The Society recognises the use of immunisation and blood testing as a way of allowing reduction of quarantine where rabies antibodies are found.

1.9.2 The SPCA believes that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that Hong Kong is free from rabies. A system comprising immunisation and permanent identification through microchipping will provide Hong Kong with effective protection.

The SPCA promotes worldwide recognition of Hong Kong as a rabies-free area for the purposes of non-commercial companion animal export.

1.10 Euthanasia

1.10.1 The SPCA is strongly opposed to the euthanasia of healthy animals. It is striving for a zero surplus situation where all animals have a good home, no unwanted animals are born and killing will not be necessary.

1.11 Use of animal organs for transplantation into animals

1.11.1 The SPCA accepts that organ transplants between animals, particularly cats, do take place, but opposes such transplants because they cause suffering to both donor and recipient. The SPCA will not carry out or be involved in any way in such operations.

2. FOOD ANIMALS

2.1 General considerations

2.1.1 While the SPCA encourages a meatless diet, it accepts that at present animals are a staple of the Hong Kong diet and that the farming, slaughter and sale of animals takes place for this purpose. In these circumstances, it opposes farming practices that cause distress or suffering to animals, or deprive animals of the opportunity to indulge in their natural behaviour. It advocates that farming should provide, as nearly as possible, natural lifestyles for the animals concerned, and that slaughter should be carried out in the least inhumane way possible.

2.1.2 The SPCA opposes the development of farming of normally wild species such as ostriches.

2.2 Food labelling

2.2.1 The Society advocates that the consumer should have the right to know how all animal products (including non-food products) are produced and that such animal products should be labelled with the method of production.

2.3 The sale of live creatures in wholesale and retail markets, in restaurants and in the streets

2.4.3.1 The SPCA opposes the sale and/or slaughter of live food animals at places such as wet markets, shops, restaurants or in the street. The Society urges the Hong Kong government to ban the sale of live creatures for food.

2.4 Transportation of animals

2.4.1 The Society opposes trade in live animals either for immediate slaughter or for further fattening, and advocates the adoption of a carcass-only trade.

2.4.2 Whenever animals need to be transported for whatever reason, they must be provided with adequate safe accommodation, food, water and hygienic waste disposal.

2.5 Slaughter

2.5.1 Whenever animals are killed for whatever reason, the procedure must be carried out in the least inhumane way, that is, the animal should have no forewarning and must not suffer any fear or pain.

2.5.2 The Society urges the Hong Kong government to centralise the slaughter of all food animals to ensure the maintenance of strictest standards of animal welfare in abattoirs.

2.6 Casualty animals

2.6.1 The Society advocates that farm and other animals that have to be destroyed due to physical injury or disease should be slaughtered on site out of the sight of other animals and without delay.

3. ANIMALS IN THE WILD

Explanatory note: 'Wild animals' refers to species which are living free, whether native or imported. 'Feral animals' are those which are normally domesticated but are living in the wild.

3.1 General considerations

3.1.1 The SPCA opposes the capturing or killing of wild animals or the infliction of suffering on them. The SPCA believes that wild animals should be left in the wild. Their habitats should be preserved and protected. It is recognised however that sometimes human activities render their habitat dangerous for them. In these cases, if the activities cannot be stopped, action on behalf of the animals is not only justifiable but ethically obligatory.

3.1.2 The SPCA seeks to protect wild animals from any form of suffering, and strongly urges that they receive a far greater degree of protection under the law. The SPCA notes that interactions between humans and wild animals are affected by considerations of biodiversity, conservation and sustainability and seeks to do all in its power to ensure that such interactions cause the minimum of pain or distress to individual animals.

3.1.3 Before exceptions to the principle of opposition to the capturing or killing of wild animals can be considered there must be strong scientific evidence that there is a legitimate reason in the particular instance.

3.1.4 In all cases methods of control and capture should cause the minimum of pain or distress to individual animals and wherever possible non-harmful methods of prevention or deterrence should be developed and used.

3.2 Conservation

3.2.1 The SPCA is concerned with the welfare of all wild animals and it deplores human-made changes in the environment that cause suffering to wild animals. Changes to the environment may include interference with or the direct destruction of habitats. This includes the destruction of wetlands, coastal damage caused by reclamation, the loss of forests and environmental degradation caused by stream channelisation.

3.2.2 The Society is extremely concerned about the danger to wild creatures caused by pollution. The pollution of air, land or water by chemical substances, waste products, etc., may cause either direct suffering to wildlife or have a more indirect effect through damage to the environment itself.

3.2.3 The waters surrounding Hong Kong have been polluted with heavy metals, Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other manufactured substances which are poisonous to marine life. The Society urges all relevant authorities to enforce strict controls on the use of pesticides and other dangerous chemicals and minimise the pollution of the rivers and the sea in order to preserve the health of all and the rich variety of species in the region.

3.3 Trade in wild animals

3.3.1 The SPCA opposes all trade in wild animals, parts of wild animals and products derived from wild animals. Wild animals, including endangered species, are traded for various reasons such as for use in experimentation, keeping in zoos or as pets and for food and medicines.

Note: Hong Kong is notorious as a world centre for the trade in fur pelts, wild birds, rhinoceros horns, ivory, tiger and seal penises, bear gall bladders and paws and other things.

3.4 Feral cats and dogs

3.4.1 The feeding of what were once domesticated and now are feral animals is well meant and should be supported by a sterilisation programme. It is SPCA policy to channel care of such animals through registered colony carers.

3.4.2 Cats. The SPCA recommends that, where the welfare of feral cats is ensured and their presence is accepted by the owners of the site, the animals should be humanely trapped and veterinary advice sought regarding their health. Attempts should be made to rehome kittens or cats which are not totally feral. Euthanasia should be carried out on cats which in the opinion of the veterinary surgeon are too sick or which are injured to the extent that returning to the site would be inadvisable. The remaining cats should be spayed or neutered, appropriately immunised and treated for parasites. While under anaesthetic, one ear of the cat should be 'tipped' to enable the cat to be easily recognised as having been desexed. The desexed and identified cats should only be returned to the site if they are under the care of a recognised feral colony carer. The insertion of a microchip into such cats is considered desirable but not compulsory.

3.4.3 Dogs. The SPCA believes that similar appropriate policies as for cats should also be applied to free-roaming dogs.

Note: The SPCA acknowledges that there may be behavioural issues in dogs that may hinder re-release.

3.5 Snares and traps

3.5.1 The SPCA opposes the manufacture, sale and use of snares and traps which cause suffering.

3.5.2 The Society recognises the necessity of capturing animals on a limited scale for a variety of reasons and, in such cases, accepts the use of live traps but only if they are used under stringent controlled conditions. The SPCA approves of live traps only when the trap is capable of restraining an animal without causing pain or injury and the trap is visited at least every 6 hours. Where animals are to be destroyed, a method of killing must be used that renders the animal insensible to pain and distress until death supervenes.

3.6 Poisons

3.6.1 The Society opposes the use of poisons that cause animal suffering and is concerned about the widespread agricultural and commercial use of substances that are potentially lethal to wild, farm and domestic animals and may often also affect human health.

3.7 Marine mammals

3.7.1 The SPCA opposes the hunting and killing of whales, seals and dolphins for any reason other than to relieve their suffering.

3.7.2 The SPCA believes that the methods used to kill hunted marine mammals almost always cause prolonged and unnecessary suffering.

3.7.3 The SPCA believes that there is no scientific evidence to demonstrate that seal populations have any significant detrimental impact on commercial fish stocks.

3.7.4 The SPCA is concerned about the welfare problems associated with the incidental capture by commercial fisheries of marine species which include whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles and seabirds.

3.8 Sharks

The Society opposes the hunting, maiming and killing of sharks for any reason other than to relieve them of their suffering or to avert immediate danger to humans. The SPCA condemns the return to the water of sharks whose fins have been sliced off. Such sharks are likely to suffer a slow and painful death.

4. ANIMALS IN ENTERTAINMENT, SPORT AND FASHION

4.1 General considerations

4.1.1 The Society opposes the infliction of pain and suffering on, or the killing of, any creature in the name of sport, entertainment or fashion.

4.2 Captive animals

4.2.1 The SPCA opposes any degree of confinement likely to cause distress or suffering. Animals should be left in their native habitat if possible. If not, they should be kept in spacious, well-run sanctuaries. Animals should be kept in a manner appropriate to the normal biological and environmental requirements of their species.

4.2.2 The SPCA opposes the feeding of live creatures to captive animals for entertainment.

4.2.3 The Society recognises that pet corners can be beneficial and educational when properly run. However, it opposes pet corners where welfare problems are caused by uncontrolled handling and feeding, a lack of adequate supervision and excessive disturbance.

4.3 Performing animals

4.3.1 The SPCA opposes the use of animals for any form of entertainment where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.

4.3.2 The SPCA opposes exhibitions or presentations of animals, whatever their species, in circuses and menageries. It also opposes the keeping and training of animals, including aquatic animals, for commercial shows where this causes suffering and distress to the animals.

4.3.3 The SPCA is concerned to ensure that animals used in the making of films, television programmes, advertisements and in the theatre shall not be caused suffering or distress.

4.4 Animals in sport

4.4.1 The SPCA opposes any form of animal fighting for sport, entertainment or gambling.

4.4.2 The SPCA opposes training practices, races and conditions or facilities that result in injury or distress to animals in competitive events. The Society is concerned about the transportation of racing animals and the disposal of unwanted and spent animals. It also approves of a break for horse and dog races in the hot and humid conditions of summer, and disapproves of any shortening of this break.

4.4.3 The SPCA opposes the use of drugs and any other treatments which are administered with a view to altering the racing performance of an animal, including by masking pain.

4.4.4 The SPCA opposes the use of whips and spurs on horses.

4.5 The giving of animals as prizes

4.5.1 The SPCA opposes the giving of live animals as prizes.

4.6 Fur and reptile skin

4.6.1 The SPCA opposes the farming, trapping and killing of animals for their fur or skin. It also opposes the trade and wearing of fur and reptile skins.

4.7 Hunting

4.7.1 The SPCA opposes the hunting of animals with dogs or other animals.

4.7.2 The SPCA opposes the hunting of animals with weapons for sport.

4.7.3 The SPCA opposes the pinioning, brailing and beak trimming of, and the use of spectacles or blinkers on, game birds kept in rearing pens.

4.7.4 The SPCA opposes the killing of predatory animals solely because they may be considered a threat to game birds.

4.8 Sports and the animal environment

4.8.1 The SPCA opposes the use of any equipment during sporting pursuits that may inadvertently harm an animal or its environment, such as lead weights, lead pellets and paintballs.

4.9 Angling

4.9.1 The SPCA believes that angling inflicts pain and suffering on fish and other animals.

5. ANIMALS AND EDUCATION

5.1 General considerations

5.1.1 The SPCA opposes the use of animals for education where distress or suffering is likely to be caused.

5.1.2 The SPCA believes that every person should receive animal welfare education. The prevention of cruelty and promotion of kindness to animals can best be achieved through both formal and non-formal educational activities.

5.2 Animals in educational establishments

5.2.1 The SPCA believes animal welfare should be taught in schools and covered in higher education. It advocates the inclusion of animal welfare components within higher education courses which enable students to explore the ethics of animal welfare.

5.2.2 The SPCA believes that animal welfare can be taught in schools without keeping animals, and that all animals should be studied in their natural habitats in preference to the classroom.

5.2.3 If animals are to be kept in schools, proper provision must be made for their physical and mental well-being. The requirements are:

- that a named person is at all times responsible for the welfare and husbandry of the animal(s);
- that provision is made for suitable housing, husbandry and veterinary care at all times, including term time, weekends and during holidays;
- that any contact between pupils and animals is supervised and controlled;
- that any animals kept are prevented from breeding.

5.2.4 The SPCA opposes animal breeding programmes in schools.

5.2.5 The SPCA opposes visits to animal-related venues which increase stress levels or cause unnecessary disturbances to animals. The animals' welfare must be paramount.

5.2.6 The Society believes that all educational visits should be part of a structured animal welfare curriculum and should be organised to highlight and define animal welfare issues.

5.2.7 The SPCA opposes visitors taking animals into schools where the visits are detrimental to the animals.

5.3 Dissection

5.3.1 The SPCA opposes the practice of dissection of animals in educational establishments.

5.3.2 If animal dissection is practised, no pupil should be compelled either to perform or watch. The views of students who wish to withdraw from dissection should be respected and no penalty exacted.

5.3.3 The Society advocates the creation and use of educational resources which provide alternatives to dissection.

5.4 Experiments and demonstrations

5.4.1 The SPCA opposes experiments and demonstrations in educational establishments which are detrimental to the welfare of animals.

6. ANIMALS IN INDUSTRY AND NON-AGRICULTURAL COMMERCE

6.1 The SPCA opposes any use of animals in industry, technology projects and other work environments which are detrimental to their welfare.

7. ANIMALS USED IN MEDICINE

7.1 Pain and suffering caused by the use of animals in medicine

7.1.1 The SPCA opposes the use of animal parts in medicine if there is any possible alternative or where there is no credible scientific evidence of their efficacy. The Society notes that traditional Chinese medicine practitioners emphasise how easily, cheaply and effectively such animals can be replaced with herbs.

8. LABORATORY ANIMALS

8.1 Pain and suffering in experiments

8.1.1 The SPCA opposes all experiments or procedures, including behavioural ones, that cause pain, suffering or distress.

8.1.2 The whole complex question of the prevention of pain, the relief of suffering and the reduction of distress to the animals must be kept under constant review.

8.1.3 The Society urges a major reform of Hong Kong's outdated legislation on the use of animals in experiments.

8.2 Alternatives

8.2.1 The SPCA urges the development of techniques that will result in the "replacement, reduction or refinement" of animal experiments, that is, the concept of the "3 Rs", explained in 8.2.2 below. The Society regards as an advance any technique which will replace the use of animals, reduce the numbers used or reduce suffering and otherwise improve laboratory animal welfare.

8.2.2 The Society agrees with the following statement by the RSPCA of Britain on the "3 Rs":

"Examples of **replacement** techniques include cell, tissue and organ cultures; the use of human volunteers; the use of epidemiological surveys in human medicine; the use of inanimate models; the use of films and videos in teaching; and more extensive computer analysis. More could be done to develop replacements for animals and such work merits greater government support.

"Techniques leading to **reduction** in the numbers of animals used include the setting up of centralised data banks, adequate prior literature research together with improved experimental design including the use of appropriate statistical methods, or the use of films and videos in teaching.

“Examples of **refinements** include the use of analgesics and the abolition of death and extreme end-points in any biological study. The RSPCA believes that refinement offers the best scope for alleviating laboratory animal suffering in the short term. However, this does not compromise the Society’s long-term aim of completely replacing animals in laboratories with alternative techniques. The RSPCA is concerned that laboratory animals often live in confined and barren conditions and urges that animals be provided with enriched environments allowing them to express natural behaviours.”

8.3 Laboratory animal supply

8.3.1 The SPCA opposes the import and export of laboratory animals.

8.3.2 The SPCA urges the licensing and inspection of breeding and supplying establishments.

8.3.3 The SPCA urges the re-homing of laboratory animals where appropriate.

9. BIOTECHNOLOGY

9.1.1 The SPCA opposes manipulating the genetic constitution of animals which may cause pain, suffering or distress.

Note: The SPCA believes that the production of genetically modified animals for potential uses in science, medicine and agriculture has serious animal welfare and ethical implications. In particular the SPCA is concerned about the suffering caused to both the genetically manipulated animals themselves and the animals used in their production.

It is recognised that research into genetically modified animals and other organisms has been carried out for many years and appears likely to increase rather than decrease in the foreseeable future.

The SPCA strives to ensure where genetic modification or associated work occurs that full consideration and concern are given to the animal welfare and ethical aspects of producing and using genetically modified animals.

9.1.2 The SPCA opposes the patenting of animals.

The SPCA believes that patenting animals reduces their intrinsic value, encouraging the view that they are merely manufactured objects rather than sentient beings capable of suffering.

Furthermore, the SPCA believes the financial incentives involved in patenting transgenic animals could override welfare considerations.

- END -

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