THE ETHICS OF WILD CAPTURE

Have we the right to take higher marine mammals from their world?

Are dolphin and whale displays educational?

Rabies silent killer
- A Hong Kong Perspective

Greyhound: Running for their lives

Pig Husbandry in China

SPCA CELEBRATES 90th ANNIVERSARY

SPCA Newsletter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong)
General Enquiries: 2802 0501
For details of these services and programmes, please visit our website at www.spca.org.hk

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(for after-hours veterinary emergencies)
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SPOTLIGHT

Protecting the Welfare of Marine Mammals

The question of keeping higher marine mammals in captivity is an issue that becomes more troubling the more we understand these creatures. Capturing higher marine mammals such as dolphins, killer whales and belugas from the wild and then to confine them in a tiny enclosure for the purposes of display is something that we find completely unacceptable. This is especially so when the enclosure in which we make them live out their lives is infinitesimally smaller compared with their natural environment. The captive experience for a wild marine mammal is contrary to its natural experience.

The SPCA believes it is wrong to bring a wild marine mammal into captivity for the purposes of display or entertainment. These mammals display an intelligence and sentient level that is higher than our average companion animals. When one examines the negative factors of capture and confinement, in particular the numbers which die just to obtain one animal and the mental stress of that animal being kept in a minute enclosure for its remaining days, one will reasonably conclude that it is wrong. The argument that it is justifiable because of the educational value is therefore flawed. How can something be educational when it is wrong?

The articles we present in this issue challenge you to consider whether we have the right to behave in this way.
Marine Mammals in Captivity
Valid Education Or Unjustified Suffering?

A beluga whale was one of the first marine mammals displayed to the public. Held at the Boston Aquarium and Zoological Gardens under the care of the famed seal trainer James Cutting, the whale was to be trained but Cutting decided that performing animals was not what he wanted at the gardens. He was publicly congratulated as a result by eminent scientist Louis Agassiz for “his understanding that the performances formerly carried on in it, from which nothing could be learned, was at last to be stopped”.

Believe it or not, this took place in 1861, 150 years ago! That controversy existed over the welfare of marine mammals so long ago is surprising, especially when in the present day we find the debate about the value and methods of displaying captive marine mammals as alive as ever.

Of course, many things have changed since the 1880s. Dolphinariums, oceanariums and marine parks have been invented, training methods have been developed and blockbuster movies like Flipper, Free Willy and The Cove have been pivotal in the public perception of these animals. The public interest in captive cetaceans has risen and fallen like the sea tides, but the issues being debated have been the same: the source of the animals, their welfare in captivity and the value of the educational message provided by their captivity.

Complications during the capture process have been known to kill individuals, while others die in holding pens or during transportation due to high stress and poor handling.

A beluga whale being presented at an “educational” show.

In the wild, Belugas swim hundreds of kilometers every day.
Australia, The Philippines, China, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand have banned the live capture of cetaceans.

The Source
Displaying captive cetaceans is big business, but to do it you have to have the animals. Since the 1963 film Flipper dramatically increased the popularity of dolphinariums, the demand for marine mammals by parks has been incessant. As the capture of wild cetaceans increased, governments and institutions imposed regulations to protect wild populations, forcing marine parks to look far and wide for additions and replacements.

The first tightening of regulations came from the US in 1972 to control the numbers of dolphins being caught off the coast of Florida. Canada banned the capture of orcas in 1975 and went on to ban the capture of beluga whales in 1992. Live orca captures since 1977 number over 50, mainly from Iceland, but the Icelandic government has denied permits to capture them since 1990. Other countries that have also banned the live capture of cetaceans include Australia, The Philippines, China, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand.

Captive breeding programmes have helped to reduce the numbers taken from the wild but despite some success they have been insufficient to sustain the current captive population and wild captures still continue. Live exports of dolphins are increasing from the South Pacific, the Caribbean and Cuba. Russia has become the world’s largest supplier of belugas since the Canadian ban, with wild whales being caught every summer and then held in small marine pens in Vladivostok until buyers can be found.

The Welfare
No one can deny that the taking of cetaceans from the wild causes high levels of suffering. Complications during the capture process have been known to kill individuals, while others die in holding pens or during transportation due to high stress and poor handling. Those that survive then have to adapt to a captive lifestyle very far removed from their former life. In the wild, these animals swim hundreds of kilometres a day, they live in social groups called pods and show many complex behaviours associated with dominance, mating, maternal care and hunting. In captivity, all of these natural behaviours are lost or severely limited and such denial leads to stress. This stress is often recognisable by pacing, self-nutilisation, ulcers and sores, aggression or depression. Studies have shown that the life expectancy of captive orcas is significantly less than that of wild orcas and this is strong evidence of the high stress of captivity.

The welfare issues associated with marine mammals in captivity have been recognised by a great many people and governments. Australia banned the live display of cetaceans on welfare grounds in 1986 after a 117-page report was commissioned which cited “painful and stressful capture techniques, the high mortality rate of captive cetacea, and a captive environment which was not able to provide for the cetacea’s social or biological needs”. Similar legislation has followed in the United Kingdom, Hungary, Costa Rica, Panama, Brazil, Nicaragua and some US states (Hawaii and North Carolina). Italy has banned swim-with-dolphins programmes, and the Netherlands have capped their public display licenses at two.

However, there is still a long way to go as highlighted by the recent EU Zoo inquiry (2011) by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS). The inquiry reported that all of the 286 cetaceans held in 34 facilities across the EU were being denied the freedom to behave naturally and were prone to conditions related to high stress and poor nutrition.

The Educational Message
Many marine parks argue that they provide an educational service that helps in the long-term conservation and protection of cetacean species, but surveys undertaken to measure this have very mixed results. For example, in a survey at Sea World Australia in 2001, researchers found that 64 per cent of visitors listed the number one reason for their visit was to have fun and be entertained, 58 per cent of visitors listed a chance to see wildlife they didn’t usually see and only 37 per cent listed an opportunity to learn about wildlife as one of their reasons for visiting the aquarium. A study commissioned in 2007 by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums of their accredited zoos around the US showed similarly unsatisfactory results with no statistically significant change in overall knowledge of visitors.

Both of these surveys concerned facilities that maintain the highest of standards and yet there are clearly doubts about the effect of the educational message. It is therefore very worrying to consider how ineffective the education may be at the majority of marine parks that do not uphold strict standards of display. The WDCS EU Zoo Inquiry 2011 found that an average of only 12.3 per cent of the commentaries at the shows included any information about the animals on display that could be considered to be educational and only 31 per cent had any signs about the animals on display.
Of Dolphins and Decency

When you consider that dolphins and other whales have been around on this planet for at least 50 million years, compared with much less than a single million years for us human beings, you have to wonder how we got control so quickly over them. They have larger brains than we have. They’re bigger and stronger, faster, sleeker and altogether more perfectly formed than we are. And yet, just as we have come to dominate 30 per cent of the world (that which is above water) in the short time we’ve been around, we could say that dolphins and other whales are the dominant species in the other 70 per cent, which is water.

The bottom line is that we’re both at the top in our separate worlds, cetaceans in their watery domain, we on land. When we scan the horizon for similarities, we have a moment of recognition because we’re actually very much alike. We’re both mammals, for instance, mammals of a high order for we’re both self-aware, and we’ve both adapted almost perfectly to the world we live in. As mammals, we both breathe air, mothers in both worlds suckle their young in loving family groups around which is woven a way of living that fosters social rules maintaining a balance like the golden mean of ancient Greece.

At least that’s true of dolphins and other whales. Where did we go wrong? What happened in our world to make so many of us rush with such abandon into the exploitation of our counterparts in the other 70 per cent of the world? Why do we capture these beautiful fellow creatures and make them objects of fun? And oddly enough the most fun we seem to have is capturing them, pinning them up and making them pull us through the water, one after the other. Why would anyone who understood what was actually going on enjoy this? How can we, who

Ric O’Barry with a dolphin which starred in the television series “Flipper”
do understand what's going on, tolerate it? And how can those who exploit dolphins and other whales do so without a ripple of conscience, as if they had a right to?

Most countries would not permit this abuse for the real reason they exist: money. Most countries have laws against cruelty to animals, laws that began early in the 19th century. But obviously these laws have a loophole because, despite all our efforts, displaying dolphins publicly for money is now a multi-billion dollar industry. Hunters of dolphins, suppliers and shippers, marketers, park construction workers, trainers – this list goes on and on and they all cash in. Some nations allow it because they've got bigger problems. Some nations see nothing wrong with it. Some allow it for the wrong reason: that it's educational. They say that many people would never get to see a dolphin except for the dolphinaria. But what about all the people who will never see a snow leopard? A sabre-toothed tiger? Or the dodo bird? Taken even at face value, their argument is a fraud, because these dolphinaria are not educational, they're anti-

ally to blame for what is happening to dolphins and other whales. And that's true. We don't personally capture them and put them in what to them are tiny torture chamb

“Those dolphins are not smiling. If one of those dolphins were to fall dead on the dock, he would still wear that look and it would still not be a smile.”

Ric O’Barry

educational. They show not a dolphin in his own world but a trained dolphin, a dolphin trained to act like a clown, in our world.

It may be tempting to point out that we are not person-

ners, and we don't withhold food till they perform silly little acrobatic tricks to our liking. We're not to blame, not a single one of us, in the same way we're not to blame for the world's murders, arsons, kidnappings and so on. We're not to blame because (1) we don't personally do these things and (2) we've helped pass laws against them, laws with good stiff penalties that express our desire to make the world free from such abuse. We pass laws against murder, kidnapping and all the rest not because of some abstraction about society or the rule of law, but because we're sick of it. We've had enough. Just like now we're revolted by those who capture dolphins in the wild and imprison them for the rest of their lives.

If words alone, if logic, reason, facts and history were enough to destroy the dolphin industry that has warped our lives, they would be long gone now. We need more than words; we need laws to stop them. We know that it cannot be done overnight. It may take many years. We may even have to compromise a little. But now is the time to start eliminating this evil or it will never happen in our lifetime.

Ric O’Barry

“Ric O’Barry is a dolphin advocate who formerly helped capture and train wild dolphins for the 1960s television series “Flipper”. He was featured in the film, The Cove, which exposed the yearly dolphin drive hunting in Taiji, Japan. In 2010, Ric O’Barry and Mark Berman have also been active in preventing the acquisition of wild caught dolphins from the Solomon Islands.”
Most of us know the standard claim of the marine park industry. It goes something like this: “When you come to see dolphins and whales in captivity you are being educated. And education leads to attitude change and conservation of these animals in the wild.” There are several assumptions the marine parks want you to make. One is that dolphin and whale displays are educational. The second is that the alleged education leads to an increased motivation to protect the animals. And the third is that this attitude change leads to actual behaviour that helps conserve the animals in the wild. That’s a tall order!
I’ve been a college educator for more than 16 years and I daresay that none of my faculty colleagues (nor I) would ever make such a zealous assertion about the impact of our classroom teaching where we actually present accurate information, help students analyse it, and measure performance with tests and assignments. Yet, the marine park industry resolutely asserts that they are in the business of education; they know that education provides a credible reason for confining these intelligent animals in their facilities as “ambassadors” for their wild counterparts. And education is something they know no one opposes.

But what is the evidence that visiting dolphin and whale displays is educational in any real sense? Let’s leave aside the fact that much of the information fed to the public by marine parks about dolphins and whales is inaccurate. If dolphin and whale displays are indeed educational then there should be sufficient evidence for learning and attitude change that support this conclusion. In fact, to date, there is none. The studies that the marine park industry relies upon to support their claims of education are characterised by one common weakness; the studies typically involve asking visitors whether they think they have been educated. But they do not actually test knowledge. The marine park industry cites several polls to make their argument. One of these is known as the 1998 Roper Poll, which simply showed that after visiting animal displays people believed they appreciated the animals more. But there were no questions assessing knowledge or attitude change. Moreover, this poll was commissioned by none other than SeaWorld! Another poll that is often cited in defence of the educational claim is the 2005 Harris Poll. Like the Roper Poll, the Harris Poll only assessed visitors’ beliefs and perceptions, not whether they actually learnt anything after seeing the display. The poll does not ask respondents about the specific knowledge they have gained, or what specific conservation actions they will undertake after visiting an animal display. So, again, none of these efforts can be used to claim that dolphin and whale displays (or displays of other captive animals) have real educational value.

The Association for Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) conducted the largest study of visitors to zoos and aquaria and published their study, entitled “Why Zoos Matter: Assessing the impact of a visit to a zoo or aquarium”, online in 2007. It was not a peer-reviewed study, which means that it was never analysed by other experts to determine if it is worthy of publication in a refereed scientific journal. Instead, the AZA published their results on their own website. The authors found that “there was no overall statistically significant change in understanding…” (p. 10). That is, the authors of the AZA study found no significant gains in general knowledge resulting from zoo or aquarium visits. So, despite the bewildering claims of the AZA, this study did not show that visiting animal displays is educational or promotes attitude change. To date, there have been no other studies that have demonstrated the educational value of zoo and aquarium displays.

The entire justification given by marine parks for capturing and confining dolphins and whales for display is baseless. The authors of the AZA study concluded that visiting zoos and aquaria enhances understanding of wildlife and impacts feelings and attitudes towards conservation. However, in a methodological analysis of the AZA study published in 2010 in the peer-reviewed journal, Society & Animals, my co-authors and I found that these conclusions are entirely unwarranted. In other words, the methods used in the AZA study were too deeply flawed to warrant such conclusions. Moreover, when all was said and done, the actual reported gains in knowledge reported by visitors to zoos and aquaria were disappointing. The authors found that “there was no overall statistically significant change in understanding…” (p. 10). That is, the authors of the AZA study found no significant gains in general knowledge resulting from zoo or aquarium visits. So, despite the bewildering claims of the AZA, this study did not show that visiting animal displays is educational or promotes attitude change. To date, there have been no other studies that have demonstrated the educational value of zoo and aquarium displays.
It is shocking that an average of 150 people die every day from rabies, a totally preventable disease. Many of these deaths occur in Asia, where transmission to humans most commonly occurs through the saliva of unvaccinated and poorly controlled domestic dogs. As the 5th World Rabies Day approaches, we take a moment to consider this widespread and deadly disease and its significance in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong we could be forgiven for feeling that rabies is not a threat; after all Hong Kong is one of the few places in the world that is rabies free. However, this has not always been the case, and we need to be aware that there is an ever-present risk of reintroduction. Hong Kong is a part of China and therefore it is unsurprising that the most likely source of rabies into Hong Kong is from the mainland. In the last 60 years, Hong Kong has had two outbreaks of rabies, in the 1950s and 1960s, and both coincided with outbreaks in China. Through the concerted efforts of various parties including the Government Veterinary Services and the public, these outbreaks were brought under control and the disease eradicated.

Monitoring trends in China (see chart) can help us identify these high-risk periods of disease transfer to Hong Kong. In 2007, a rabies outbreak, which resulted in 3,303 human deaths, occurred but thankfully did not spread to Hong Kong. This may be a result of improved bio-security and border control but could also be due to Hong Kong’s dog management and dog owners’ improved sense of responsibility. Microchips are implanted into dogs as part of the anti-rabies vaccination programme and whilst more dogs are being kept in Hong...
Kong more owners are exercising proper control over their dogs and complying with the rabies vaccination law.

Certain behaviours however do put Hong Kong at greater risk. Smuggling of animals from China (and elsewhere) is a serious threat to Hong Kong. This is reportedly carried out on a significant scale for the commercial pet trade. In addition, members of the public may go on shopping trips to China and on impulse buy a cute puppy or kitten - usually the pet shop will offer a “delivery service” into Hong Kong. These animals are often sick with other diseases but many people do not realise that even puppies and kittens can carry rabies. Many people are just not aware of the risk and those that are often underestimate the consequences of their actions should rabies be present in the smuggled animal.

Understanding the causes of rabies outbreaks in China can also help us in Hong Kong. Strangely, cases of rabies in China occur in an unusual demographic. The “usual” epidemiological pattern for dog-associated rabies cases is that more occur in children, as children are more likely to play with puppies, and less likely to report bites and scratches. But in China it’s middle-aged men who are the most frequent victims, the reason for which has not been fully elucidated but it has been suggested that dog eating, raising and the dog meat trade may have a role. The incidence of rabies is highest in the provinces where the dog population is highest, which is also where traditionally dog eating occurs. In 2005, the Chinese authorities did a study on 3,000 dogs destined for the meat trade in restaurants and found that 3 per cent tested positive.

Increased rabies prevention education for the public, veterinary surgeons and medical staff is vital to reduce its spread in China. In one survey in rural China, 50 per cent of people were not aware that rabies is a fatal disease. Dog vaccination levels in rural areas (which have the highest incidence of canine rabies) are very low - 10 to 20 per cent. One commonly held belief that it is the un-owned dog that poses the highest risk of spreading rabies to people, but again another Chinese study showed that in the cases of human rabies that were examined 54 per cent were linked to a bite by a dog that was owned. Even basic first aid knowledge can help, such as the importance of washing a wound. A study on some of the Chinese human cases showed that 54 per cent had had no wound washing and 72 per cent had had no post-exposure prophylaxis. Basic steps that could have prevented death.

**Rabies Quick Facts**

**What is rabies?**
Rabies is a virus that attacks the nervous tissue. Usually rabies infects mammals such as dogs, bats and foxes, but it can be transmitted to humans and is usually fatal. The incubation period can be from 2 weeks to over a year but once symptoms appear death will follow with in 2-10 days.

**World Rabies Day**
Established to raise awareness of the impact of human and animal rabies, it takes place annually on September 28, the anniversary of the death of Louis Pasteur who, with the collaboration of colleagues, developed the first effective rabies vaccine. For more information, please visit www.worldrabiesday.org

**When you travel**
Be aware of the rabies status of the country you are in. Educate your children on how to avoid dog bites and do not encourage interaction with unknown or unvaccinated animals. If there is a suspected exposure wash the wound thoroughly, seek prompt medical advice and have post-exposure prophylaxis.
RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES

THE SHORT, TRAGIC LIVES OF RACING DOGS.

In a scruffy suburb of Macau, a group of racing dogs enjoys a few intoxicating snorts of fresh air as they are led in groups of six around a deserted racetrack. Then they are tied up in rows, examined by a duty vet and then locked away in row after row of small steel cages. Four hours later, these sleek greyhounds will be released from their cages and step out onto a track where, beneath garish floodlights and in front of a crowd of a few dozen people at China’s only legal dog racing track, they will—quite literally—run for their lives.
As they spring from the traps to chase a mechanical hare at the Macau Canidrome, the odds are stacked heavily against their survival: finish in the top three and they will live to race another day. Finish outside the top three just a few times and their only prize will be a lethal injection.

The only sure bet is that within around three years of arriving in Macau, every one of these greyhounds will be dead. Healthy, uninjured but simply not fast enough to win, the dogs die at the rate of more than one a day. Last year alone, 383 were destroyed.

The chances of being adopted as a family pet when their racing days are over are precisely zero. All that awaits them after their last race is a lethal injection, usually at an age of no more than five - less than half their natural lifespan.

Eight hundred dogs live at the Canidrome at any one time. They race four times a week, and each race night there are 18 heats with six dogs in each - watched from the stands by a crowd of mostly elderly men who pay an entrance fee of 10 Macau patacas. Most punters use off-course betting centres.

Greyhound races in Macau generated more than HK$300 million in gross betting revenue last year compared to around HK$80 million four years earlier - but still only around 1 per cent of the vast sums raked in by Macau’s glitzy casinos a mile away but seemingly a galaxy away from the rundown Canidrome complex.

Imported from Australia at the rate of around 30 a month, the dogs never leave the Canidrome and are euthanised in a “killing room” inside the complex at the same rate at which they are imported.

A senior Macanese vet who declined to be named but who oversees the import and destruction of every dog, described the plight of the greyhounds as “terrible”.

“They euthanise around 30 dogs each month,” he said, adding the number of dogs put down rose from 322 in 2009 to 383 last year. In March 2011 year alone, 45 dogs were given lethal injections before being sent to government incinerators.

“When they are imported, the dogs are aged around two to three years. The longest they stay in the racing centre is three years. They all die after three years,” said the vet. “Only a few are injured. For the majority, it is simply because they can’t win.”

The imported greyhounds are sold at auction in Macau and can fetch up to 50,000 Hong Kong dollars. The Canidrome takes a commission on dog import and sales. Owners pay monthly kennel and training fees so when a greyhound slows, there is no room for sentiment.

“If they stay there longer, the owner has to pay for the accommodation and food and training,” the vet said. “The owners prefer to put them to sleep and not to continue to pay. They would rather buy a new dog.”

“In other countries they have programmes for retired dogs – they find people who are willing to adopt them as pets. We cannot do this in Macau."

The veet has approached the Canidrome and the Hong Kong government to see if greyhounds can be exported to the city when they retire and given a new lease of life as pets and as blood donors for other pets.

The obstacle is quarantine restrictions. Because Macau is not ranked as rabies-free, any dog sent to Hong Kong would have to spend four months in quarantine.

The sad plight of the greyhounds in Macau raises broader concerns about what would happen to dogs in mainland China if Ireland’s Bord na gCon succeeds in its plans to help set up a greyhound racing industry there.

The SPCA and other welfare groups have grave concerns about the setting up of greyhound racing in a country where there is presently no animal welfare or anti-cruelty legislation.

Following a public outcry in Ireland, plans to export greyhounds from Ireland to China have been dropped but greyhounds will now be sourced from other countries.

What worries animal lovers most is that there is no way to ensure that the dogs would be killed humanely or that they would not end up in the dog meat or fur industries.

Meanwhile, animal welfare groups including the SPCA are calling on Australia to halt the export of greyhounds to the Canidrome in Macau.

For the time being at least, however, there is no end in sight to the slaughter of the Macau greyhounds whose brutally short lives are documented in the files of the disheartened vet, a man who has clearly seen enough of the deadly impact of greyhound racing.

“Dog racing is not a sport. It is about gambling – that’s all,” he said. “It is terrible that there is no second chance for these dogs when they retire.

“If the racing stopped, these poor animals wouldn’t be bred. They wouldn’t have to come into the world just to race and then to die.”
Pig Husbandry in China

Have you ever thought twice before eating a slice of pork?

Fresh pork sold in Hong Kong markets is mainly shipped from northern, southern and central parts of China. On average, a Hong Kong citizen consumes more than 50 kilograms (kg) of pork every year. Before eating pork, have you ever considered the living conditions of the pigs? Are the animals treated humanely? Will the way they are fed raise any food safety concerns?

In order to answer these questions, we invited Professor Wang Qian, a husbandry expert at the office of the magazine of China’s Livestock and Poultry Industry, to reveal more details about the pig industry in mainland China.

Wang Qian, husbandry expert at China’s Livestock and Poultry Industry magazine

China is by far the largest pork producing and consuming country in the world. China’s pork output represents 48 per cent of the entire world’s total consumption. Pigs were tamed by human beings thousands of years ago, since when they have been providing more protein to humans than any other food source. Pigs naturally live to around 15 years. In recent years, however, as pig farms are established across China to facilitate large-scale pig production, the animal’s life span has been sharply reduced to five or six months, compared with about 12 months when raised by an individual farmer. Moreover, this brief life is often accompanied by disease and maltreatment.

More than 100 million pigs die each year from disease in China

In the 1950s and 1960s, pig deaths were primarily caused by three major infectious diseases – swine plague, swine erysipelas and swine pasteurellosis. The nationwide death rate stayed at around 8 per cent. In some areas where disease controls were done well, the death rate was 5 per cent.

Since the 1990s, more than 20 common diseases have been routinely found in pigs and more cases of fatal and acute diseases have been reported. A survey estimates that in recent years, pig death rates have risen to between 12 per cent and 15 per cent in China. According to data, China raised a total of 1.078 billion saleable pigs in 2006; of these, 609 million were slaughtered and 469 million were on hand at the end of the year.
That is to say, China supplies some 600 million pigs every year at the expense of more than 100 million animals which die from disease.

Reason behind high death rate: large-scale pig production

In past years, the government has encouraged and supported the establishment of large-scale pig farms, and there are increasingly fewer individual pig raisers. At present, sizeable pig farms, including some large-sized industrialised pig farms, supply 40 per cent or even more of the market demand. The change has sharply increased pig output and enhanced pig productivity, but has also led to continuous deterioration of the animals’ health conditions and welfare. Chen Huanchun, a professor at Central China Agricultural University, pointed out that swine diseases are spreading in China as foreign pigs which grow quickly but have poor disease resistance are introduced to replace local pigs that grow slowly but show strong resistance to swine diseases. The most serious illness is respiratory disease, followed by reproductive disorders and diarrhoea. These diseases occur frequently and carry high mortality rates. In most cases several diseases are reported at one time, posing a grave threat to the health of pigs. Individual pig farmers, usually raise no more than five pigs and that poses little risk of spreading infectious diseases from one pig to another. They feed pigs with grain and green foodstuffs, and stools are collected and used as fertiliser. Conditions in the pigpen might be poor, but these local pigs are able to adapt to the tough conditions and are equipped with strong resistance to disease. Moreover, antibiotics are rarely used. Green feeds are helpful in bolstering the pigs’ immune system and the use of pig manure as fertiliser poses no serious pollution problem for the surrounding environment.

For large-scale pig farms, however, productivity is the top priority. For this model of pig production, only improved categories of pigs are raised, they live together in high density states and are fed by industrial feeds. In the large but crowded pig farms, air quality is poor and environmental conditions are deplorable. They have little resistance to illnesses and can, as a result, easily contract swine diseases and spread them to peers, posing bigger risks of a pandemic breakout.

Improving pigs’ health conditions and welfare to reduce or remove their suffering

1. Promote the concept of healthy pig production

As environmental conditions continue to deteriorate and new diseases have emerged one after another in recent years, the growing food safety concern has become a huge obstacle hampering the sustainable development of the husbandry industry and has sent a warning about any production activity that is in defiance of the laws of nature. If we are unable to reduce consumers’ demand for cheap pork and restrain producers from the pursuit of maximum profit, we cannot expect any fundamental improvement in the pigs’ health and welfare under the current circumstances where we continue to supply and consume more and more pork.

2. Promote the concept of healthy food consumption

According to the China Food and Nutrition Development Guidelines (2001-2010), in order to keep food intake at reasonable levels, Chinese people are recommended to consume no more than 155 kg rice, 13 kg bean products, 147 kg vegetables, 38 kg fruits, 10 kg edible oils, 9 kg sugars, 28 kg meat, 15 kg eggs, 16 kg dairy products as well as 16 kg aquatic products every year. In fact, however, the average pork consumption in 2006 amounted to 39.5 kg.

According to the first household nutrition survey released in October 2004 by the Ministry of Health, because of the excessive consumption of meat and greasy foods and an inadequately balanced diet, 18.8 per cent of the adult population, or 160 million, suffer from high blood pressure. Some 2.6 per cent of the adult population, or more than 20 million, are fighting diabetes. Dyslipidemia is found in 160 million adults, or 18.5 per cent of the whole population, while 22.8 per cent of Chinese adults are overweight and 7.1 per cent are classified as obese. That’s to say, 200 million people weigh more than they should and 60 million are very fat.

The Chinese government should intensify its efforts to encourage people to adopt a science-based and reasonable diet and to reduce pork consumption. If average pork consumption per capita could be reduced by 15 kg a year, the Chinese population will be healthier and pig demand could decrease by more than 300 million animals every year. With fewer pigs in the pigpen, we can expect the possibility of a swine pandemic to be sharply lowered and the pigs’ health conditions and welfare to be significantly enhanced.
SPCA Hong Kong Canine Welfare Awards 2011

Sponsored by the Genlin Foundation

The “SPCA Hong Kong Canine Welfare Awards” were presented at the 2011 Asia for Animals Conference in Chengdu. “SPCA Canine Welfare Awards” is the first China-based award promoting canine welfare in Asia. It is awarded by SPCA Hong Kong and generously funded by Genlin Foundation. Winners are given a cash prize of $10,000 (USD) to encourage their work in animal welfare.

Canine Hero Award

Winner: Mrs. Gill Dalley, Soi Dog Foundation of Phuket

Since 2003, more than 31,000 animals have been sterilised and treated both at Soi Dog’s centre in Phuket and at mobile clinics throughout the region, including the neighboring provinces of Krabi and Phang Nga.

Soi Dog had set itself the target of eradicating rabies on the island and vaccinates every animal against rabies. In 2008, Phuket became the first province in Thailand to be declared rabies-free by the government as a direct result of Soi Dog’s program.

Gill lost both lower legs in 2004 after contacting a rare bacteria whilst rescuing a dog from a flooded water buffalo field, but was actively working again days after discharge from hospital.
Canine Welfare Enhancement Award
Winner: The Philippine Animal Welfare Society of Manila (PAWS)

The PAWS successfully drafted and lobbied for the first animal welfare law in the Philippines, which was approved in 2006. They have also lobbied for the Rabies Act, which increased penalties for dog meat traders.

In 2009, the PAWS helped block the entry of greyhound racing and filed the first prosecution case against dog fighting in the Philippines.

PAWS is also committed to promoting sterilisation, vaccination, and humane education in Manila.

China Canine Welfare Award
Winner: Pet Orphans Home of Beijing (POHOME)

Established in 2007, a very young and knowledge-based team forms the POHOME. They are working in a well-organised structure with great transparency. The POHOME built its shelter based on RSPCA standards and provides regular vaccination and sterilisation services.

The judging panel believes that the POHOME sets a good example for other animal shelters and animal protection groups, demonstrating the importance of scientific management and sustainable development.

Sponsor information:

“Genlin Foundation” (www.genlin.org) puts an emphasis on cultural and civilization charity works. This foundation is an extension and new development of “Peng Xin Chao Foundation”. With the influence of Mr Peng Xin Chao, the Genlin Foundation has strong faith in our future, and has high hopes that we can work together and rebuild a society that is full of wisdom, fairness, freedom, and care.
HONG KONG HAS CHANGED TREMENDOUSLY OVER THE LAST 90 YEARS, BUT THE SPCA’S CENTRAL MISSION REMAINS THE SAME: TO PROTECT THE WELFARE OF ANIMALS.

Ninety years ago, in 1921, a group of people with big hearts for animals founded the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) with Governor Sir Reginald Stubbs serving as chairman and patron.

Two years later, with support from Lady Ho Tung, the SPCA set up its first Dog Home on Waterloo Road. Lady Ho Tung lent her support again in 1934 enabling a second Dog Home be established in Kowloon City. In the 40’s with the outbreak of World War II the work of the SPCA was put on hold as its building was destroyed. In April 1953, volunteers and staff members reunited to continue the mission.

Dating back to 1939, the transportation of pigs and cattle was unsafe and inhumane; the biggest problem arose from the use of crates made of split bamboo, wounding 95% of the livestock arriving in Hong Kong. The transportation and slaughter of farm animals had always been a major concern to the SPCA and after much campaigning and lobbying of the Government new improved legislation came into force in the 80’s.

The live skinning of quails also caused huge concern at the SPCA. Meetings were held with the Heung Yee Kuk and the New Territories Quail-Vendor Association. Ways in which quails should be kept and killed humanely were taught to quail vendors. A model carrying cage designed by the SPCA was also displayed. Hawkers who continued the cruel live-skinning of quails were prosecuted and fined.

At the time, the SPCA Inspector Team already worked round the clock, having six uniformed Chinese Inspectors working on each side of the harbour. Routine duties included frequent patrolling of wet markets, pet shops, attending to alleged cruelty complaints, rescuing animals from danger, as well as checking and emptying the nine cat boxes scattered around the territory.

To understand the origins and development of animal welfare in Hong Kong over the past century, and the growth of the SPCA the leading animal welfare organisation in the territory, Mr. Graham Cheng and Ms Mok Ching Lan are the ideal storytellers.

The man who witnessed the creation of animal-related laws in Hong Kong

Mr. Graham Cheng, more commonly known as “Cheng Sir” first joined the SPCA as an Inspector in 1970. Graham was promoted to Chief Inspector in 1985 and after a year of assuming the Chief Inspector role, Graham further strengthened his team to comprise of a Chief Inspector, a Senior Inspector and seven Inspectors. Due to the difficulties in transportation at the time, two Inspectors were dedicated to the New Territories.

In 1987, Graham was assigned yet another interesting and challenging role, the Society’s first ever full time Educator, heading a series of Animal Welfare Education Programmes prepared for school children and youth groups, Police Officers and the like. Talks delivered by Graham ranged from endan-
gered and protected species, animal-related legisla-
tions, to general care for companion animals.

Graham rejoined the Inspectorate Team in 1992
as Chief Inspector responsible for training new In-
spectors. In the same year, after prolonged monitor-
ing, lobbying and pressure by the SPCA's Veterinary
and Inspectorate Teams, the Lai Chi Kok Zoo finally
announced its retirement plan.

In 1996, Graham was promoted to Superinten-
dent of Inspectorate. He was well-known and much
respected for his knowledge of the laws relating to
animals, and in 2000, he retired after serving the
SPCA for three decades in various key positions.

Graham's recollections of 30 years of service, are
in the 70's, the pet population was much smaller,
and people less concerned about pet care.
When he first joined the SPCA, there were approxi-
ately 26 staff serving the entire SPCA, and the
Inspectors needed to assume other roles includ-
ing providing kennel care and veterinary support.
Witnessing the laying of the animal protection act
half a century ago, Graham is glad to see a big rise in
penalties to animal abusers.

The lady who humanely cared for the sur-
plus cats for half a century

Ms Mok Ching Lan, now in her eighties, volun-
teed for more than 40 years devoting her time to
improving the fate of street cats. Soon after World
War II, Ms Mok, still in her twenties, came to the
SPCA to work as a volunteer. At that time, local Chi-

nese volunteers were rare, but Ms Mok was passion-
ate and driven in her desire to help homeless cats.

This young lady turned up at the SPCA asking
what she could do to help. In the early 60's, Ms Mok
initiated the Cat Box Programme, a big, covered
wire cage, later upgraded into wooden boxes painted
in green, bearing white-coloured labels "SPCA,
"adult cats" and "kittens". Ms Mok Ching Lan
recalled "in the early days, local Chinese didn't treat
their pets the way we do nowadays. They only had a basic
idea about pet care, and these poor animals were
treated more like a piece of equipment to deter or
catch rats, or to guard the property. They lived on
table scraps, and 'desexing' would not be on the care
list. As a result, there were huge population of cats
wandering the streets, and their quality of life was
extremely inadequate. I could not bear seeing them
living such a vulnerable, helpless life so I voiced out
to the SPCA to work out this 'Cat Box Programme',
offering an avenue where people can leave their
unwanted cats in good hands, ending the miserable
fate of these poor little ones."

There were a total of nine Cat Boxes scattered
around town from Stanley to Sai Kung, serving
the community from the 50's to late 2002. Ms Mok
travelled around town, sometimes aided by the In-
spectors, to collect animals placed inside the boxes,
carrying them back to the SPCA for proper care.
Close to 1,500 animals were collected through these
Cat Boxes in their 50 years of service, and the last
retired Cat Box now rests in the Museum of History
of Hong Kong, serving its ongoing mission teaching
young people how Hong Kong evolved into a caring,
animal-friendly city.
Mast Cell Tumours: Not All Skin Growths Are Harmless...

An eight-year-old male neutered pug, Gut Cheung, was presented at the SPCA having had two skin tumours removed from the underside of his chest at a private clinic. Histopathology of the masses showed they were mast cell tumours (MCTs) without "clean margins", meaning the entire tumour had not been removed. As there was incomplete removal of the masses the surgical scars themselves had to be treated as tumours as the chance of recurrence is high. The priority of any cancer surgery is always to attempt to remove the entire tumour. This sometimes means removing so much skin and tissue the wound cannot be closed completely!

On closer inspection, a further nine skin masses were located on the dog. These were all treated as MCTs and removed with large margins. This meant, however, there was inadequate skin to close the wounds properly without applying too much tension. The owner was warned some wound breakdown was to be expected. Amazingly, dogs will heal very well even with substantial skin defects ("gaps"). Gut Cheung made a full recovery and all the wounds were healed after two to three weeks.

MCTs are the most common skin tumours in dogs and the second most common skin tumours in cats. They can be benign (not aggressive) or malignant (aggressive) and are graded 1-3. Grade 1 tumours are benign, grade 2 are intermediate and grade 3 are malignant. MCTs are very locally invasive (they grow into the surrounding tissue and are much larger than they look - a little bit like icebergs or the roots of a plant). It is recommended to perform a "fine needle aspirate" (FNA) on all skin masses prior to removal. An FNA is where a small amount of tissue is removed by corking on a syringe with a fine needle and this tissue (the aspirate) is placed on a slide to look at the cells. This means the surgeon can know in advance if the growth is a mast cell tumour and if so, wide surgical margins are needed (removing the tumour plus 2 cm of tissue/skin around the tumour). On removal, all tumours should be sent for histopathology to determine the type of tumour and how malignant (nasty) they are. If the skin mass has tumour cells extending to the margins of the tissue (as with Gut Cheung initially) then a second surgery is normally required to remove the scar with 2 cm margins. Sometimes, especially in grade 2 MCTs, further laboratory tests are needed to aid in prognosis. Also if the MCT is malignant (nasty) then chemotherapy is sometimes needed to increase survival time.

Dr. Alesclair Frost
VET FACTS: THE TRUTH ABOUT TICKS!

Summer in Hong Kong is a great time for you and your dogs to enjoy hiking, swimming and barbecues. However, your dogs need extra protection when they are out and about, not just from the heat but from ticks and the diseases that they help transmit. Here are some facts which hopefully will keep your dogs safe and disease free!

Ticks are small, eight-legged creatures that are usually brown to grey in colour. They are slow-moving parasites that feed on your dog’s blood and then drop off.

Tick bites create small raised, itchy lesions on the skin. The ticks themselves carry a number of parasites that spread to your dog’s blood via the tick’s saliva during feeding, causing diseases collectively termed TICK FEVER.

In Hong Kong there are two main types of tick fever parasites, known as Ehrlichia and Babesia, which attack the platelets (small cells in the blood stream that are involved in clotting) and the red blood cells respectively.

The clinical signs can be acute or chronic, and can include the following:
- Lethargy, malaise and lack of appetite
- Fever
- Panting and breathing difficulties
- Pale gums and/or jaundice (yellow gums)
- Weight loss
- Nose bleeds, bruising and bleeding problems
- Dark brown or reddish urine (“tea-coloured”)
- Abdominal pain

The degree of treatment depends upon the severity of the disease. Mildly affected dogs (early in the disease process) may only require one to two injections and/or a course of antibiotics and other medications for at least three weeks. More serious cases may require hospitalisation, blood transfusion and more aggressive treatment.

IMPORTANT FACT:
> The Disease Can Prove Fatal Despite
> Treatment and Many Dogs That Survive
> The Initial Disease May End Up As Life-Long
> Carriers and Can Suffer Relapses

Given the potential severity and persistence of tick fever, prevention is definitely better than cure:

**FRONTLINE** spray or spot-on plus can be applied safely to your pet every two to four weeks in order to effectively control ticks.

**PREVENTIC** collars are specifically designed for tick (not flea) control and need to be replaced every two months.

**REVOLUTION** has limited efficacy in Hong Kong and is not recommended for tick prevention.

**REMOVING TICKS** when you see them on your dog can help slow down the transmission of tick-borne diseases.

FOR INFORMATION ON THE BEST TICK CONTROL FOR YOUR PET PLEASE CONSULT YOUR VETERINARY SURGEON
Heat stroke in dogs is especially common in summer but can occur anytime as Hong Kong never really gets that cold! Unfortunately, dogs do not sweat through their skin like humans, but instead expel heat by panting, and sweating through the foot pads and nose. If a dog cannot effectively release heat, the internal body temperature rises and results in damage to the body’s cells and organs (heart, brain, lungs and kidney). Some dogs can recover fully from heat stroke if caught early enough... sadly, many others do not.

Prevention is the key... here are some top tips for keeping your dog safe and cool!

- Avoid vigorous exercise on warm or humid days (especially at midday), and never force your dog to exercise with a tight muzzle. Certain muzzles impede the ability to pant and your dog will quickly overheat.

- Have chilled drinking water available at all times; carrying a lightweight material dog bowl makes it easy to offer your dog water during any part of a walk. If possible bring along a few cool packs.

- During the walk splash water on your dog especially the head.

- It is also common sense not to clothe your dog; in fact any clothing which restricts your dog’s ability to move or perform normal acts should never be worn. Fashion statements are not a priority for dogs, and putting clothes on them when they already have a fur coat is a heat stroke victim waiting to happen.

- Certain breeds are more sensitive to heat, especially short-nosed breeds like Pugs, Pekingese and Bulldogs or dogs with sensitive wind-pipes such as Pomeranians and Yorkshire terriers. so take extra care.

- Long-haired dogs also benefit immensely from a full body shave (ideally leaving ½ an inch of hair to prevent sunburn and insect bites).

- Obese animals have an extra layer of insulation and just like their human counterparts they will overheat more easily.

- Dogs suffering with heart disease and respiratory issues also have a greatly increased risk.

- Never leave your dog alone in a car on a warm day, even if the windows are open. The inside of a car acts like an oven, with temperatures rising to dangerously high levels within a matter of minutes.

- Take extreme care with dog carry bags; make sure your pet carrier has adequate ventilation holes and that the bag size is not too small for your dog. Placing ice packs wrapped in a thin towel can help keep things cool.

Dr. Jane Grey

What if your dog overheats...

Signs include rapid panting, wide eyes, salivating, staggering, weakness, dark red gums and even total collapse.

If you suspect your dog is suffering with heat stroke it is imperative you take the dog to the nearest vet clinic as soon as possible.

On the way, try cooling your dog by placing wet rags on the body, or try to place your dog in any available cool water. If ice or ice packs are available, place in a moistened cool towel and place around the animals head, neck (not tight) and body.

Do not force water into the dog’s mouth if it cannot drink, excessive panting can mean they might inhale the water making breathing more difficult.

Remember prevention is the best cure, so think ahead when having “fun in the sun” with your dog!
Lantau Stories
Caring for a Kindly Cow: A Case Study

On 15 May 2011, the SPCA was alerted by a member of the public to an injured cow seen wandering weakly along the roadside at Shek Pik on Lantau Island. The animal was attended to the same afternoon. It appeared that she had been attacked by dogs a few days earlier. Her inner left hind leg was severely lacerated; the wounds had become infected and were crawling with maggots.

She was a gentle soul and by encouraging her with bananas it was possible to sedate her by injection so that her injuries could be treated. Within a few minutes she was asleep on the ground, enabling the wounds to be debrided of infected tissue, cleaned of maggots and flushed with a litre of saline. Antibiotic cream and flystrike powder were then applied. She was also given antibiotic, ivermectin (a parasiticide) and pain relief injections. A numbered tag was attached to her ear to allow easy future identification. Once treatment was completed, an injection was administered to reverse the sedation and she regained her feet within 10 minutes, walking off into the bush.

Over the rest of May and early June visits were made to locate her and reassess her progress. A was taken on 18 June. Her wounds had already healed remarkably well, with healthy pink granulation tissue forming on her inner left thigh. She also seemed brighter and had gained weight.

The most recent revisit was on 21 July, when she was found with a group of friends enjoying the green grass brought on by the summer rains.

Unfortunately, attacks on cattle (particularly young calves) by dogs are not uncommon on Lantau. But we are pleased to see this elderly lady survived to make a fine recovery.
I completed a human nursing course more than three years ago, but instead of starting a career in the health care industry, I joined the SPCA (HK) and became a member of the Inspectorate Department, helping to save the lives of animals. The medical know-how I gained in my nursing training is of great value in my job, despite the fact that I am taking care of animals instead of humans.

My work not just cats and dogs, but all kinds of animals. In the short time that I have been an inspector, I have had many opportunities to learn about different animal species, including local and exotic wild animals, birds, monkeys, bulls, wild pigs and foxes—to name but a few.

The “language barrier” which divides animals and humans means that we can’t really know what animals are thinking, but careful observation and study do help us understand expressions, especially of dogs. Dogs have been tamed by humans for more than a thousand years and have evolved into many different breeds, from small ones like the cute chihuahua to big ones like the lion-shaped Tibetan mastiff. The enormous difference in the size of their bodies perhaps makes it hard to believe that they are of the same species. Despite these differences in body size, we can still conclude—based on the way they behave and act—that they share the same ancestor: the wild wolf.

In particular, when they perceive any approaching threat or are safeguarding their own territory, their first reaction is always the same regardless of the breed: they will bark. They bark in an attempt to deter the intruder. If that doesn’t work, they will open their mouths wide and display their most powerful weapon—their sharp teeth—and then growl and stare at the intruder. If he or she remains undeterred, they will attack.

So, should an unknown dog approach you in this manner, you must be well prepared for what’s coming. Try not to make any direct eye contact with the dog and move away from its territory. If a dog assaults you, keep calm and shout loudly to discourage it. Stand against a wall and do not turn your back to the dog, so that it cannot launch an attack from behind and push you down. In the event that you are bitten, you should seek medical treatment immediately. Although the risk of rabies in Hong Kong is very slight, rabies does exist in parts of China. Dog bites are anyway unpleasant and bacteria in the dog’s mouth may cause wound infections. In other words, proper treatment is imperative.

Of course most dogs are lovely and are friendly to people, and we really don’t want to see anyone attacked by a dog. However, being prepared is always better than being at a loss as to what to do if you face such a situation. Inadequate preparation can result in greater harm.
ANIMAL CRUELTY IS A CRIME!

From March to May 2011, the Inspectorate received a total of 11,130 calls and handled 1,592 animals. SPCA Inspectors rescued 454 animals, investigated 217 complaints, and conducted inspections of 87 pet shops and 242 wet markets.

March
Living dangerously! A much-loved family cat got itself stuck on an outside ledge, 28 floors up in a residential building in Kwal Chung. It was rescued by an inspector and returned to the arms of its grateful owner.

March
Blind as a bat? Actually bats can see, but in the dark many species rely on echolocation, which is something like the sonar of a dolphin. Bats emit squeaks while flying, the sound waves bouncing off insects or obstacles pinpointing their location. However, netting on a slope in Kwal Chung trapped seven of these unsuspecting mammals. They were freed by an inspector and taken to Kadonoe Farm for treatment and care.

March
Following the arrest by police of the “owner” of the 149 dogs found in Lau Fau Shan in appalling conditions in what was assumed to be a dog-breeding establishment, the man was convicted under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance. He was fined HK$5,000 and sentenced to a Community Service Order of 150 hours. This case was reported in Pawprint 83. Many of the dogs were found with untreated illnesses and all had been kept in totally inadequate cages.

April
This unfortunate dog somehow got itself into a waste-drainage channel in Fanling filled with noxious fluid and rubbish and was unable to climb out. It was rescued by an inspector and returned to its owner.

April
A black goat found wandering in the countryside in Fanling with multiple wounds on its body was rescued by an inspector and taken to our hospital for treatment and care. Several small flocks of feral goats exist in the New Territories derived from earlier farmed or domesticated animals.

April
Another cat living dangerously – but this time at ground level and sheltering against the road divider in the middle of the busy Tuen Mun Highway. The cat was rescued by an inspector and taken to our hospital for custody and care.
April
Forty-three pure-breed puppies, part of an illegal animal trade, were rescued in a joint AFCD, police and SPCA operation in Kwun Tong. The puppies were all found to be suffering with various infections as a result of the poor hygienic environment in which they had been held and the lack of proper care given to them. Prosecution under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance is ongoing.

May
A Chinese Muntjac which had tried to squeeze through a roadside barrier in Ma On Shan and got itself stuck was freed by an inspector and taken to Kadoorie Farm for custody and care. The Muntjac is also known as a Barking Deer because the males bark in the breeding season.

May
A long way from its traditional habitat, this cattle egret was found on the roadside in the Kwai Chung Container Terminal unable to fly. It was rescued by an inspector and taken to Kadoorie Farm for treatment and care. Cattle egrets are large, long-legged wading birds, often found near cattle on whose backs they perch (hence the name). In the breeding season, the feathers of the head and back of the cattle egret change from white to orange, as seen here.

May
Cats are curious by nature. This one ventured outdoors and was reported hiding in a small gap above an air conditioner on the 3rd floor of a Tai Po estate building. A team of inspectors using two long ladders managed to reach the frightened animal, but it did its best to avoid being caught. It eventually jumped onto the 1st floor platform and into a rescue net. As it was wearing a collar, efforts were made to locate the owner and the cat was returned home.
May
A Corgi which had somehow become trapped on the podium of a residential building in Sam Tseng was rescued by an inspector and taken to our hospital for custody and care. Corgis were once commonly bred to herd sheep and livestock, but are probably better known as the breed of dog favoured by Queen Elizabeth II.

May
This case was reported in Pawprint 83. It resulted in a person being convicted of cruelty to animals and sentenced to 14 days’ imprisonment and a fine of HK$2,000. Three Poodles had been left in an unattended room in To Kwa Wan in December 2010 causing the death of one dog and the other two being found in poor condition.

May
Prosecution under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance followed for the owner of this poor dog for causing it unnecessary suffering. It had been shut unattended for a long period in a small room in Lau Fau Shan without food and water. When found, the dog was listless and lying in its own excrement.

May
Another conviction for cruelty to animals was meted out to a person for leaving a Golden Retriever in an unattended room in Ap Lei Chau in February 2010. When found, the dog was very emaciated. The sentence was two months’ imprisonment. The conviction follows the prosecution reported in Pawprint 83.

May
A case being investigated for suspected offences under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance was handed over to the police in an effort to locate the offender who had abandoned five cats in two cages in a village in Kam Tin. The cats had been provided with no shelter or water.
SPCA’s Community Dog Programme

The evening before: all dogs are present and accounted for.

The SPCA team prepare for a good nights rest before the busy day.

Just a fraction of the equipment brought in by boat for the operations.

A dog being prepped for surgery after sedation.

Surgery in the field still requires high standards of precision and hygiene.

Record keeping is critical in the management of desexing programmes.
The Steps into Action

Sai Kung’s Sai Wan is an idyllic bay, popular with beaglgoers. Reachable only by chartered boat, or by public transport and a 45 minute walk, means that even the delivery of daily necessities to the area is a challenge. In early March, the SPCA’s Community Dog Programme (CDP) was contacted by a persistent and kind-hearted hiker concerned about the increasing number of dogs in the village, some in poor health. Juliana had taken it upon herself to help feed these dogs regularly, making the long journey by public transport weekly, sometimes more often. Villagers themselves felt helpless to stop the rampant breeding and consequential suffering of the vulnerable pups. After several site visits, extensive community consultation and meticulous preparation, the SPCA set about bringing the CDP to Sai Wan.

Led by Vivian, our unwavering CDP coordinator, a band of volunteers and SPCA staff moved some 100 kg of equipment by boat to the site on the evening of 4th August. The group camped overnight on a nearby beach and action started early the next day with the setting up of a field clinic in the middle of the village. "Black Girl" was the first dog to be desexed, her surgery underway before 8.00 am, and very quickly the team got into an efficient routine. By the end of the day, with the assistance and support of the local residents, a total of 18 dogs had been neutered. A crucial part of the day’s success was Juliana’s long relationship with the dogs and the community that enabled the operation to run quickly and smoothly. The urgency of the work was evident by the frequency of maggot-infested fight wounds, skin disease and tick infestations, which were all treated. We hope that the efforts of the CDP will mean that the Sai Wan village dogs are now able to live more stable and stress-free lives.

To find out more about the CDP, please visit http://www.sPCA.org.hk/welfare/eng/dogs.html

Hey Presto!

Kittens don’t usually come any worse than this. This little lady had the misfortune to fall into a bucket of suspected tar and got herself into one very sticky mess. Fortunately she was mysteriously rescued by a member of the public who plucked her out and left her on the ground nearby before leaving the scene. A hotline call was later received from a good spirited citizen who had found her and had her in a box waiting for the Inspector. With lots of tender loving care and the remarkable, experienced hands of our Superintendent Inspectorate, Bobby Wong, she was magically transformed back to her former, adorable self.

She is now being fostered by one of our inspectors.
As with any pet, when thinking about getting a parrot it is important to understand the commitments this will entail. Parrots can be wonderful companions with their bright plumage and lively personalities, but many people underestimate the amount of time and effort needed to keep their feathered companion happy and healthy.

Parrots are extremely intelligent animals. African grey’s are estimated to have the intelligence of a four-year-old child, and as such they need a high level of stimulation. With insufficient enrichment parrots will learn quickly that making lots of noise (or doing other “naughty” things) will get them attention (e.g. you rushing over to stop the behaviour). They might not be able to tell the difference between good attention and bad attention – the biggest reward for them is your attention. One of the most common reasons people give up their parrots is the noise they make.

The importance of having a well-socialised, enriched parrot cannot be underestimated. Many of the behavioural problems boil down to stress, inadequate socialisation and boredom. Remember that your parrot will spend most of its time in a relatively small cage so any form of entertainment will benefit, even having the TV or radio on can help. Parrots love to explore things with their beaks and feet, and a variety of toys can help relieve boredom and give your parrot something to do on its own. Toilet rolls, baskets, phone books, cardboard, leather strips, pieces of wood, boxes can be used as toys. Make sure there are no toxic chemicals or items (e.g. varnish, paints, toxic inks, nails or staples) that could hurt your parrot.

Another way of entertaining your parrot is by encouraging it to play with its food! Hide fruit, vegetables and nuts in its toys to promote it to forage, a natural behaviour. While on the subject of food it worth noting that you should look for a good pellet food instead of a seed mix – this prevents your parrot from picking out only the foods it likes. Sunflower seeds are very fatty on their own and should only be given as treats. Such treats should form a very small percentage of the bird’s diet.

Many species of parrot live in large flocks in the wild and have complicated social interactions. This trait is also true of captive parrots, which can form strong bonds with their favourite person. Some parrots might become aggressive to others, start to puck their own feathers or start stereotypical behaviours (e.g. continual swaying and calling) when their favourite person is away. For this reason, it is important for all members of the family to spend time with your parrot, so that it does not only bond to one person but feels part of your “flock”.

Introduce your family slowly – start by offering treats to the parrot from outside the cage so your parrot can adjust to each new person. Introducing your parrot to new people and experiences slowly will enable it to adjust to changes that otherwise could be very stressful. Your parrot could be with your family for more than one generation (African greys live on average for 50 years) – this is truly a lifetime commitment by you and your family. 😄
English Language and Animal Welfare Learning Tools for our Youth

The ‘Loving Animals’ song that closes our educational talks is a favourite among our young attendees. To the tune of ‘Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star’ the kids belt out this catchy reminder about pet care in both English and Chinese for maximum impact and recall. Although a simple message that each day a family pet should be fed, nurtured and cleaned up after, it is the foundation of conscientious ownership.

Animated student projects

While songs may captivate our youngest audience there is nothing like animation to really excite a youthful crowd. Our recent partnership with the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Lee Wai Lee at IVE) is an interactive English learning platform highlighting Responsible Pet Care concepts which incorporates the ‘Loving Animals’’ ditty into a flash game design. Not only is this an exceptional tool to impart the welfare message but it makes learning English fun, too.

One of the projects titled “Homes” follows a day in the life of an animated character as he weaves his way through a serious of game zones. With English as the medium, the player improves language skills while seeking ways in which to discover the needs of the animal. More experienced gamers work puzzles, matching pictures and a music programme all designed around the SPCA song performed by a cartoon creature.

Computer-Animated SPCA kernels

The tried and true axiom that we don’t know what we have until it is gone makes “Let Us Be a Good Owner” a clever and effective instructive game. The animated dog owner neglects his pet’s feelings but when the dog goes missing, the man is beside himself with worry.

Through tracking him down, the owner learns important life lessons about responsible care and compassion. The scenes are realistic with a kernel that mirrors the one at the SPCA and our special song playing in the background. Each segment of the game illustrates a different type of care covering diet, health, cleanliness and play.

Animal care and vocabulary

In a project titled “Be a Responsible Pet Owner”, the SPCA song is set to the flash animation and shows the tender moments in life we enjoy with our pets. Guided by the lyrics and the questions asked at the end, the young learner is triggered to reflect on the meaning of caring for animals and respecting life. In addition to the musical animation, there are three separate games to support basic vocabulary learning. These activities include reading the descriptions of the animals’ features and identifying the animals; selecting the appropriate daily needs of pets; and choosing the right actions to provide those needs in caring for pets. Sound clips can be easily accessed so that the listener can clearly hear the correct English pronunciation.

On June 8th, the IVE (Lee Wai Lee) students’ presented their project framework on the school premises. The results are quite an achievement and we sincerely look forward to uploading the finished projects onto the SPCA educational site.
BIRTHDAY BANG!

SPCA’s oldest known volunteer, Miss Mok Ching Lan (life member since 1955), and our former Superintendent Graham Cheng (1970) jointly fired the Noon Day Gun at Causeway Bay on 23 June 2011. Jardine’s Noon Day Gun is significant to the Society because it was in the Jardine Matheson Board Room that the first meeting of the Executive Committee was held to form the SPCA, on this day 90 years ago! Special events are planned to mark the year, including the 90th anniversary SPCA Animal Welfare Awards. More details to be announced in due course.

Second Chance for Love!

KUDOS also goes to winners of the Second Chance for Love Photo Competition organised by Hill’s Pet Nutrition and SPCA! We congratulate Ms Poon Lai Ching and Ms Gally Leung whose the highest vote of “Woof Woof” and “Meow Meow” photos were placed first and second respectively. The competition featured pets which were adopted from the SPCA and encouraged members to capture those precious and often fleeting moments companion animals give us. Our sincere thanks to Hill’s for donating prizes and to all adopters who are giving our animals a “Second Chance for Love”!
THOUSANDS of cub scouts came together at Wu Kai Sha for Cuboree 2011 on July 17. SPCA helped the Hong Kong Scout Association to organise a booth, where cub scouts learnt about responsible pet ownership, animal care and welfare through games and song, with a view to helping cub scouts to get the "Animal Care" proficiency badge.

CONGRATULATIONS to students of Excel College who took part in an essay competition held by SPCA and the College after their visit to our Wanchai Centre. The assigned topic was "Hong Kong is a safe haven for animals". Elocuently written pieces by Sarita Sia and Shadow Chiu made them joint first-prize winners, while Jason Tsui and Janet Li came in second and third respectively. We believe that reflective writing is the best way to shape attitudes of the younger generation, and we will continue to work with schools and educational centres to promote animal welfare.

Our Welfare Work in Numbers
April - June 2011

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Both Pearl and Benson are thoroughly enjoying summer on the farm here in Canada. Expats from Hong Kong, both dogs run through our throng of chickens and are forever playing with each other. They are dearly loved and very much appreciated. Other than Benson’s bad habit of running off with my knitting wool and Pearl’s insistence on sleeping with us (who are we kidding, we love it!), they’re model citizens of Grey Muzzle Farm.

They and 9 other dogs (mostly old timers) have become a very happy and tight-knit pack. Benson starts to check in on us every 20 minutes or so starting around 0630. If he sees either of us open our eyes, he starts twirling around and doing what we call his “happy dance”. He then has a very hard time containing himself until he gets fed shortly thereafter.

Benson and Pearl have developed a special bond and will wrestle with each other throughout the day. Shortly after breakfast, and the handout of everyone’s medication, we gather all of the dogs together along with some chicken feed for our morning walk. The dogs, as well as 40 chickens then have the run of about 4 acres of the farm. Interestingly, none of the dogs run after the chickens; perhaps they know that the chickens are the source of those delicious eggs they occasionally get for breakfast!

Supper is a surprisingly quiet affair. All the dogs have their special spot and wait patiently for their bowl. Another round of medication follows where every dog gets a piece of flat bread with peanut butter, whether they have any pills to take or not (that way they’re all used to the routine when it comes time that they need medication as well).

We often watch a movie in the evening, and Pearl is the only dog we have who sits beside us on the couch, and actually watches the action on the tv. If she sees an animal, she barks. Very smart girl!

As so many of our dogs are older, Pearl will go from one to the other when she tires them out looking for a playmate. Interestingly, her favorite playmate since his arrival this spring is Benson. Maybe they remember each other from their stay at the same SPCA in Hong Kong?

Knowing something about each of their backgrounds makes it all the more heartwarming when we see them so happy and comfortable. It’s a privilege to be given the chance to be surrounded by so much contentment and affection every day. When we have a bad day, our dogs can be counted on to make us smile and feel that all is right in the world.

—Marlene and Brad
Fostering Cats: 6 Key Points

There are few people who can resist the adorable face of a kitten – myself included! I joined the SPCA in February 2011...and since then have been fostering kittens on a regular basis. Although fostering is extremely rewarding (and fun), many people shy away because the beginning basic home care can be daunting.

Here are some top tips to help your foster (or for that matter your adopted kitten) adjust to its new environment:

1. DIET: Find out what diet was being fed and feed that for at least 1 week while the kitten settles into your home. If you would like to offer a different type of food, transition to the new food slowly over several days to prevent stomach upsets. Depending on age, kittens will need feeding at least three to four times a day (maybe more); they start eating hard biscuits as early as 5 to 6 weeks of age, so offer older kittens both canned and dry food.

2. HANDLING: Many older cats can be nervous when their ears, feet and mouth are touched – simply because these are not areas where we normally pet them! During normal play/affection time with your kitten, make sure to rub the feet, ears and chin gently – with time this will usually elicit a nice purr. If a kitten grows up learning this is normal and even enjoyable, the next time your vet asks to check teeth or clean ears, you should hopefully find that kitty is a more tolerant patient!

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE HOUSE: The number one rule is take it slow. Isolate your kitten in a safe room, such as a bathroom or spare bedroom, so it can get used to the smells and sounds of your house. Make sure a comfy cat bed, clean litter-box and a few kitten-safe toys are placed in the room. Once comfortable in the “safe room”, allow your kitten to wander about the house on its own. You may find that initially it will take a few tentative steps, then run back into the “safe room”, but eventually it will be running and playing about the house as if he or she owns the place!

4. INTRODUCTION TO OTHER PETS: Again, take it slowly! Avoid face-to-face confrontations. Cats, kittens and dogs can all get along, but you must give them time to adjust to each other. To introduce cats, one nice trick is to feed them on opposite sides of a closed door. They will smell and hear each other, but will associate those smells and sounds with the happy feeling of eating a good meal.

5. HEALTH ISSUES: If you feel that something is wrong with your kitten, don’t hesitate – consult a vet right away. Kittens, like human babies, are still developing their immune system, so minor illnesses can become serious quickly. Any coughing, sneezing, vomiting, diarrhoea, lack of appetite or changes in energy level should be addressed immediately.

The SPCA is always looking for dedicated individuals to foster kittens and puppies (and in some cases adults). We generally ask foster families to provide a home for 3 to 6 weeks, or until the animals reach a suitable weight and health status for re-homing.

I love being a foster parent; being able to care for and in the process help save a life knowing the animal will go on to be adopted and given a second chance is a great feeling! 😊

If you are interested in FOSTERING please call: 2802 0501.

If you are interested in ADOPTING please call: 2232 5529.

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Nelson Cheung with Clyde
Photography by Animals in Photos