

Problems in pet trade

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The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is delighted to see the degree of interest in and awareness of the animal welfare issues connected to the current pet trade in Hong Kong.

The SPCA has for many years advocated a comprehensive review of legislation that impacts animal welfare, including that governing the pet breeders and traders.

In an SPCA survey of the public, 90 percent of respondents supported a program to encourage pet shops and breeders to carry out ethical welfare practices including no overbreeding, proper animal care and providing sufficient space for animals.

In another SPCA survey, focusing on reported cases of sick animals purchased from pet shops, we discovered a staggering 78 percent of these cases were reported sick in the first week after purchase.

Even more surprising, 9 percent of this total were found sick on the day of purchase. Further areas of concern include that 26 percent of the dogs purchased were not microchipped in line with licensing conditions and in 12 percent of cases a vaccination certificate was not provided - also a breach.

These findings highlight some problems that presently exist within the pet trade. They also show the need for more consumer education.

The SPCA believes legislation needs to be developed and enacted to improve the welfare of all animals in the pet trade. This should extend to breeders (commercial and hobby), pet shops and all pet traders.

The SPCA is supportive of setting a minimum age for purchase of pets and have previously advocated 16 years. We would welcome, among other improvements, the introduction of minimum standards of care for the pet trade, the training of pet shop operators and staff and mandatory provision of species and breed-specific information and instruction for care, for each animal sold.

We are always willing and pleased to provide assistance to effect these improvements.

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