

Ombudsman probes Government's work on animal management and protection of animal rights and welfare

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, today (December 27) announced the launch of a direct investigation operation to probe the Government's work on animal management and protection of animal rights and welfare.

In recent years, various sectors of the community have a growing concern about the rights and welfare of animals, particularly in the wake of cases of severe cruelty to animals that have occurred over recent months, with many of these animals found abused to death. The general public is calling for tougher enforcement by the authorities and heavier penalties. The Office of The Ombudsman notes that the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has proposed to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance since 2019 to step up efforts to combat animal cruelty, but it has not finalised the amendment proposals to date, nor has it set a specific timetable for introducing the bill into the Legislative Council.

Moreover, the Government has uncovered a number of illegal animal breeding farms and animal smuggling activities in recent years, and there have been media reports on the illegal importation, illegal breeding and unlicensed trading of animals. These illegal activities not only pose threats to public hygiene and health, but also cause substantial suffering to animals.

Meanwhile, the Office has from time to time received complaints against the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) for improper treatment of animals captured or seized, and failure to properly handle reports of animal cruelty or illegal breeding and unlicensed trading of animals.

Mr Chan said, "With the advancement of society, the public attaches more importance to animal rights and welfare, while pet ownership is also increasingly common in Hong Kong. Although the Government has indicated that it will step up combating animal cruelty through legislative amendments, I aspire to conduct this direct investigation operation to comprehensively review the adequacy, effectiveness and room for improvement of the Government's work and measures for preventing and combating animal cruelty, protecting animal rights and welfare, and animal management. Therefore, I have decided to launch a direct investigation operation to thoroughly examine the AFCD's work regarding animal management and protection of animal rights and welfare, including the prevention of animal abuse, handling of suspected cases of animal cruelty, measures to combat illegal breeding, smuggling and unlicensed trading of animals, treatment of stray animals and re-homing arrangements, as well as public education and publicity to promote animal

rights and welfare. Where necessary, pertinent recommendations will be made for improvement."

The Ombudsman welcomes views from members of the public on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by January 24, 2025:

Address: 30/F, China Merchants Tower, Shun Tak Centre
168-200 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong

Fax: 2882 8149

Email: complaints@ombudsman.hk