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Print journalist stepping into the online world. Avid multi-tasker with a love for books and movies.

Why most cases of animal abuse go unsolved

By Alicia Wong – March 9th, 2011



SPCA's assistant manager of operations, Jaipal Gill, with a puppy up for adoption. (Photo: Yahoo!)

A stray cat covered with burns on its bloodied body writhed in pain on the ground. Nearby, two kittens, also burned, lay motionless. A broken bottle labeled thinner stood near the cats.

The felines were brought to the [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#), but the cat was in such pain it had to be euthanised. The kittens were dead on arrival.

The abuse took place in 2008, and until now police have not caught the culprit.



Investigations revealed the cat suffered cranial trauma and chemical burns in the lungs. (Photo: SPCA)

The incident was just one of the over 700 animal cases that Mr Jaipal Gill, 28, handled in 2008 as an inspector for SPCA at that time. He said that some nine in 10 investigations into animal cruelty are left unsolved because there are not enough witnesses or evidence.

"You just have to accept the reality, which is not easy. You channel your frustration into cases where you can make a difference," said Mr Gill, who studied animal welfare science in Australia for one year.

Now helping run the shelter and supervise inspections as assistant manager for operations at SPCA, Mr Gill shares with Yahoo! Singapore his experiences in trying to improve animal welfare in the country and what more can be done.

"(As an inspector), the good will be really good, but the bad will be really bad," said Mr Gill. You get to make an immediate difference

in the life of an animal, but other times, the law is not on your side or you also encounter horrific cases without means to solve them, he said.

He recalled his futile effort in trying to convince an owner of three Cavalier King Charles Spaniels to let the dogs be free to move about instead of keeping them caged. She told him: "Mister, my house is not a zoo. I cannot have animals running all over."

"That is probably one of the most frustrating things. You cannot do anything in that kind of a case," he pointed out.

He has found kittens with metal wires or clothes pegs around their legs, and the abuser nowhere to be found.

Currently, the SPCA sees up to 80 cases a month, of which an estimated 10 per cent are animal abuse or suspected abuse cases and another 10 per cent are complaints against establishments. The remaining cases require the SPCA to educate pet owners.

Sometimes the outcome is satisfying.

Mr Gill recalled the case of a family that kept their Shetland Sheepdog confined to a small cage with space enough only for the animal to take a step forward and back, even though the house had a huge garden the dog would have been happy to run around in.

The owners were concerned about the dog's excessive barking when released, but they were finally able to see things from the "animal's point of view", said Mr Gill.



A owner kept eight rabbits in a cage, hoping it would prevent them from mating. After intervention, the owner gave up the rabbits to the SPCA. (Photo: SPCA)

Last year, the SPCA saw 933 animal welfare cases, up from 864 cases in 2009. Mr Gill attributed it to greater awareness of animal issues among the public.

"There is a growing concern for animals at large," said Mr Gill.

As a developed country, Singaporeans can perhaps now stop thinking about themselves and more about other people and animals, he added.

The SPCA is now working on guidelines for handling live seafood, for instance, not boiling crabs alive or killing a fish before scaling it. With growing evidence that fish are sentient, "we should give them the benefit of the doubt and treat them with more respect," stressed Mr Gill.

He believes it is also time for Singapore to have a more comprehensive animal welfare law. Currently, anyone found guilty of cruelty to animals can be imprisoned for up to 12 months, fined up to \$10,000, or both.

"As our population grows, you'll get more and more animal issues coming up," said Mr Gill, citing the [United Kingdom animal welfare act](#) as a good one to follow. For instance, it is now illegal in the UK for pet shops to sell animals to under-16s.

Mr Lois Ng, executive director of the [Animal Concerns Research & Education Society](#), believes the current laws are sufficient, but authorities need to exact stronger penalties to deter people from acts of cruelty.

In January, a female mongrel was reported to have been [hit on the face repeatedly with a metal chain](#). The dog was put to sleep recently, and the abuser remains at large. Last August, a [Pomeranian was brutally bashed to death at a void deck](#) and even with witnesses present, the abuser could not be identified.

The cases saw a strong public outcry for stronger enforcement action.

Vice president for the [Cat Welfare Society](#) Veron Lau felt there needs to be more education to increase people's tolerance and understanding of animals. She highlighted social media as a good way of reaching out to the public.

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Pingpong Ng 5 days ago

like i said before, it order for the culprit to be caught. Since gov have impose fine or imprisonment for convicted crime, why not impose a reward to those report the crime. If gov impose fine let said \$10k, they can give \$5k as a reward to the person who have reported the crime or have caught the culprit, why must gov keep all the fine by themselves. Aint our gov rich enough? They can impose reward for wanted criminal why not impose reward for wanted animal torturer.....

 Anti Affairs and 25 more liked this



Clara Fu 3 days ago

You think the govt will bother? You think AVA will bother? Nope. SPCA already brought to AVA's attention abt the terrible condition animals are kept in shops here. But what was AVA's comments? They didn't think there was a problem. I want one solution - Let SPCA take over the Animal Welfare aspect of the department! Cos AVA apparently don't show much care towards their Welfare!! SPCA would do a Better job!

 Anti Affairs and 27 more liked this


Kind_Soul 19 hours ago

Totally agree. SPCA, which is run by animal lovers, cant set policies. While the policies regulators are doing nothing... just because the 4-legged living thing is not treated as living thing?

 Anti Affairs and 8 more liked this

Hoai Phong Duong 16 hours ago

that s really sad

Don Lee Boon Keat 12 hours ago

if you give 5K as reward, you may creating a revenue streamer for animal abusers...

1 person liked this.

Anan 5 days ago

"The awful wrongs and sufferings forced upon the innocent, helpless, faithful animal race form the blackest chapter in our history."
"I hope to make people realize how totally helpless animals are, how dependent on us, trusting as a child must that we will be kind and take care of their needs ...

[they] are an obligation put on us, a responsibility we have no right to neglect, nor to violate by cruelty. Miserable ending for the poor animals...

Aa and 17 more liked this

 **Victoria Vickneswari Vandayar** 5 days ago

@ Pingpong

In the case of the Govt. announcing reward, guess what every Tom, Dick & Harry will be reporting their fathers, mothers, uncles for the reward money. Kinda rubbish that happen when US announce reward for reporting terrorists, everybody had information. It would be mayhem then we have too many money faces in Singapore lah, get real.

4 people liked this.

 **Yui** 5 days ago

this is sick and disgusting, they should name all animal abuse culprits and shame them publicly!!

Aa and 28 more liked this

 **zorro007** 5 days ago

Our world is nothing without trees, flowers, streams, rivers, mountains, sky and animals. So take good care of all these. It's our duty. Thanks.

nameless13 and 14 more liked this

 **Su** 5 days ago

Many Singaporeans become busier and busier; they can't spare time for their pets. Some of them throw tantrum on these pityful animals. I can't imagine how some people can beat such speechless animals while they are crying with pain till the blood profusely oozing from their body. What a cruel. GOD is observing all these. Your KARMA will back to you.

Aa and 21 more liked this

 **Suyi** 21 hours ago

Yes I believe in karma and I hope these people get theirs soon.

4 people liked this.

 **Sofea & Irwan** 4 days ago

should have treat these people the same as wat they do to e poor animal!!!!Retributionsssss!!!!!!Sickening mind!

Vienna Lovesyoursmile and 13 more liked this

 **Mike** 4 days ago

Dear Mr Gill, may I know how many inspector you have in your charge? How many case can your inspector handle per month. How does your inspector investigate on a abuse case. Seems like more work needs to be done to apprehend a abuse case. As mention in the report, the mongrel named Wander was abuse at a construction site. How is it possible that the abuser wasn't identified as there was a witness who saw the entire event and ask the abuser to stop. The pomeranian that was bashed to death. Again there was a witness, yet, the abuser not caught. There are more and more cases of abuse, how many of these culprits were arrested? These cases of animal abuse will keep rising because abusers will know they'll never be caught. I suggest SPCA should do something about it.

7 people liked this.


Ommar 4 days ago

When I see these pitiful picture of kittens, extremely upset and cant control my tears. Please all people who saw and hear these kind of abusing to animals, do inform to police or SPCA. Singapore need to take action upon those cruel creatures. We must hold hands together to prevent the image of Singapore from such ugly animal cruelty.

Hoai Phong Duong and 12 more liked this

Ommar 4 days ago


Just last two days ago, I also faced with one problem. I have feed the cats near and around the areas with can cat food (they like to eat until last piece and no residue has left) near at the mouth of Jalan Ishak. Around 7.45 pm, I feed the cats as usual. At the same time, I saw two old men standing on the platform and one man holding one dog attached with long string. And when he saw I was feeding to the cats, he had prepared to release his dog and ask to go and bite all cats. Dog also barking and growling. So I told him that if he did like that, I would call the police and SPCA and he said he didn't care and if I continue to feed the cats, he will release the dog. So, I told him that he had threatened to me verbally and I will sure call the police. And he said that he still holding the rope and hadn't release. But the length of the rope is nearly double length of normal usual one. He can commend his dog to go and bite to any creature without releasing the dog. And I said to him that if he ask the dog to bite the cats, I won't spare him.. I still can remember both men's faces. I really hate those kind of people. They are not worth to be called

 Kelvin and 17 more liked this



Clara Fu 3 days ago

Ommar, you know what you could do? If you can take a photo of their damn facews with yr HP or get help from a fren to do so, post their damn faces on FB at SPCA's page and make it know to the whole world! Let them be judged and the more ppl who know about it, the more they are being watched. These 2 idiots do not deserve to keep pets in the first place.

 Kelvin and 14 more liked this



Jay B 23 hours ago

Sick fellas... No brain.. Does not belong in the human or animal category also... Sick bastard

9 people liked this.



josephine 10 hours ago

why do people feed cats at void decks and public areas? Are these cats their pets? If yes, then take them to your own home and space. Why should you be allowed to keep you pets in public areas that all Singapore citizens and tax-payers have equal right to. Be the responsible party yourself and not let your cats be endangered by other beings.

While you love cats and think them cute, I know of many people who are terrified of cats, who do not think cats cute at all. There are also many who are allergic to cats. Cats that scratch cars in carparks, defecate at people's main doors. Should the victims then charge the 'feeders' and seek compensation from them? after all, other pet owners have always been held responsible.

If everyone respect each other and make sure their pet(s) is not a nuisance to others, surely we will all enjoy our living more. As for those who abuse their own pets, you should be punished for it.



Lady Pegasus 4 hours ago

Oh, poor you Josephine. Don't be selfish. The world belongs to all creatures great and small. Please tolerate the tiny creatures.

We feed them because they are strays that scour for dirty scraps of food and cockroaches or lizards if they are lucky to find them. We feel sorry for them and as we have a heart (unlike you), we don't think it's wrong. People who feed cats are compassionate, we feed dogs too if they are straying in neighbourhood. We do not use the money and energy of intolerant cat-haters. So do not think highly of yourself.

Please educate yourself about the problem of strays that many animal welfare has been addressing and trying to arrest. Not everyone can keep more than they could handle and we have already the limited number of pets allowed in our households too.

1 person liked this.



Justin 1 hour ago

What exactly did have cats ever done to you? Get over yourself.

1 person liked this.



Soo Sin 4 days ago

Re-frame this problem and make it the responsibility of animal owners to keep track of their "pets". If you own one, it is your responsibility not to let it stray out of your house and compound. You need a license and to show that your pet is well taken care of and not be killed or hurt by others. There are people who are allergic to animals, and your right to own a pet should not be at the expense of other peoples' health and sense of cleanliness.

1 person liked this.

sundarraaj 3 days ago

For Soo Sin:

Your comments shows a lack of information on pets, especially dogs and cats. Humans can be more filthy than pets and there are much more criminals than dog going around hurting people. So seriously we need to educate a majority of the public who have a very narrow mentality on the "cleanliness" of pets.

10 people liked this.

Soo Sin 11 hours ago

Convince your doctors and nurses about the cleanliness of your dogs, cats and any animals and see if you like them to pet these animals before they treat or handle you when you are sick/ill/hospitalized.



Talk_show_host 6 hours ago

Not so bright, are you?



jiu 3 days ago

Fcuk these monkeys! why keep pets if you are gonna be so heartless???

5 people liked this.



sundarraaj 3 days ago

There was a newspaper article on the unleashing of dogs and allowing dogs to be playing the common playground. I dont understand something in this country. If animals are so restricted, I mean we get fined for feeding monkeys and we get fined for unleashing dogs and we get fined for every single action that may be kind towards animals.

So, we have to make sure that animals are always kept under our control or totally eliminated. The government strives to make this country stray free. I am thinking what teh hell did these animals do? So they have no right to earth but only humans? I guess the fuure generation will be looking at household pets in the zoo in the hear future because everytime they see a dog in my neighbourood, the become so overly excited or shit scared!!!! Like hello!, its a dog not a bloody lion!!!!

We are so intolerant towards these beings who have every right towards this earth and mother nature as much as us egositic humans. We need to get that fact into the pea brains of our leaders in this countrywho cannot even be bothered to catch criminals who go around abusing and killing these speechless living beings.

A country that has become so sadistic in its approach to Mother nature and her animals, so intolerant towards older generation and being so materialistic its sick to live here anymore!

Aa and 10 more liked this



Suyi 21 hours ago

Our government only want babies. Not animals.
Soon, the next generation will only see cats and dogs in cartoons.

5 people liked this.



nameless13 15 hours ago

You know what is the saddest thing people say after abusing animals? "I didn't know that that would hurt them", because they never sought to understand animals. Do you know why you are fined for feeding monkeys? do you know that there has been many cases of animals falling sick after ignorant people fed them? Because they don't know what's good and not good for the animals to eat, also don't forget animals have a different biology from us, what seems clean to you may not be clean for them because viruses are species-specific, those that affect them may not affect us. Also have you ever wondered why SPCA seeks to keep the country stray free? Have you ever wondered whythis is endorsed by not just Singapore but most of the animal protection groups abroad? So you think it is right for to abandon animals when you don't like/ can't support them anymore? Or do you think it is right that we let these animals live in filthy conditions exposed to all the animal abusers out there and the chance of being road kill? Spare a thought for the animals!

Besides, don't chastise people who are afraid of dogs. You're telling me all your friends love animals? Look, just like how some animals hate the sight of humans, some humans just don't take to the idea of living with or being in close proximity to an animal. We can't blame them, you mean you don't have your own phobias? As long as these people don't abuse animals, that's fine. In fact, they are much better than those "animal lovers" who say, "look these animals are so cute!" and buy them just because of that, without knowing how to take care of them.

Get your facts straight before you call others pea-brain! There are lots of "animal lovers" out there who think they love animals a lot and pamper their pets with all sorts of rubbish, without knowing they are harming the poor animals health, making them obese and sick and causing them to lose their survival instinct. These people need to be educated because what they are doing may be an act of love, but it harms not helps the animals. See the difference? I can see you care for animals, but that's not enough, knowing how to care is key. Do your research...

But I do agree that more has to be done. much more. First off obviously is education of the people...

2 people liked this.

Jaki Teo 3 days ago

I think his name is Louis, not Lois?

Eric 3 days ago

Our Govt should impost a tougher sentence for animal abuse cases, presently is just 1year imprisonment max. I personally feels that the penalty should goes up to maybe 10 years instead. If a person can ill treat a helpless animal this way, who knows one day he might feels that abusing animal can no longer satisfy him and turns to human? The abuse is not only a threat to all homeless strays but to our society too.

Aa and 7 more liked this

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