



Protocol for the Dog Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)
Programme

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A. OBJECTIVE

The dog Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programme (the programme) in Hong Kong aims to manage and reduce stray dog population within a designated area and its associated nuisance.

B. MODE OF OPERATION

2. To facilitate the implementation of the programme and assessment of the performance of individual projects under the programme, the mode of operation is laid out as follows –

- (a) each project under the programme will be developed, organised and implemented by the Project Coordinator (PC)¹ with support and assistance from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD);
- (b) AFCD and PC will conduct public consultations before the launch of a project at the relevant local community and district levels to assess whether the project has the support of the local and district community. PC is required to explain the concept of TNR and the implementation details of the project, including the proposed area where the project will be implemented (the designated area), at these consultation meetings. AFCD will provide statistics of animal nuisance and numbers of stray dogs caught at relevant locations;
- (c) AFCD will conduct a baseline population survey in collaboration with PC three months before the project commences to collect information on the number, distribution and ecology of stray dogs in the proposed designated area;
- (d) AFCD will monitor the field work conducted by PC in the designated area during the period to be agreed by PC and AFCD. AFCD will share the monitoring information with PC (e.g. dog management statistics in the designated area);
- (e) AFCD will conduct data analysis and prepare quarterly progress

¹ Project Coordinator – the organisation developing, organising and implementing a TNR project under the programme.

reports on the number, distribution and ecology of stray dogs and the number of complaints received in the designated area. This information will also be shared with PC on a quarterly basis; and

- (f) a review of the effectiveness of the project in the designated area will be conducted once every two years.

C. IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

i. The designated area

3. An area will be designated by PC with AFCD's agreement and support from the respective District Council and the local community (e.g. the incorporated owners). This designated area shall also be bound by the following criteria -

- (a) to minimise the risk of rabies introduction, dog bites and traffic accidents caused by these stray dogs, the designated area must not be located around hospitals, schools, homes for the elderly, busy roads or within 500 metres from the boundary with the Mainland; and
- (b) to facilitate the running of the project, the designated area must be where PC can recruit sufficient carers² who are familiar with the situation of the stray dog population.

4. The initial stray dog population in the designated area has to be assessed and agreed jointly by AFCD and PC. Re-assessment would be carried out if both parties fail to reach an agreement on the exact figure of the population. The initial population should be of a reasonable size.

5. A map showing the exact boundary of the designated area and enquiry/complaint phone number shall be provided by PC in a form of notice. The notice shall be posted at locations on the perimeter of the area for public enquiry of the project and report of missing dogs. The locations and the number of notice shall be determined by AFCD and the notice must be posted before the project commences.

² Carers – volunteers or employees of PC who assist in catching and returning the subject dogs to the designated area and to care for the dogs in the area.

ii. The carer

6. PC shall recruit volunteers and employees as carers to catch and feed stray dogs within the designated area. PC shall provide a list of carers to AFCD which should include their names, Hong Kong Identity Card numbers (the first four numbers for identification purpose only) and photographs, and update the list as and when necessary.

7. PC should provide proper training to their carers on animal nutrition, animal behaviour, environmental safety and dog catching methods. All carers must undergo the training before joining the project. Any materials developed for the training shall be submitted to AFCD for endorsement and record purposes.

8. The carers must carry an identification card issued by PC for the project while engaging in any activities relating to the project for better identification. The identification card must clearly show the name and photo of the carer, and that the carer is an employee or volunteer of PC, and has completed a training course organised by PC. This is a statutory requirement for exemption from certain provisions of the Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Cap. 167D), the Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421) and the Rabies Regulation (Cap. 421A)³. The identification card must be produced by the carers to any AFCD officer or police officer for inspection upon request.

9. The carers shall provide an optimal amount of food to the dogs in the designated area and monitor these dogs (including their offspring) during the project period. Excessive feeding must be avoided. In addition, the carers shall clean up all remaining food and water of the subject dogs at the feeding site to ensure that the environmental hygiene of the location is not affected due to their feeding activities.

10. Contingency measures shall be put in place in case of sickness or absence of the carers for any reason, which usually involve another carer taking up the job. PC should provide AFCD with the names of all carers in the carer team under paragraph 6 above. Any written agreement between PC and the carers shall also be submitted to AFCD for reference before the project

³ See section 4 of the Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Exemption) Notice (Cap.167 sub leg. F) and sections 3 and 4 of the Rabies (TNR Programme)(Exemption) Notice (Cap.421 sub leg C)

commences.

11. PC must submit an overall management plan to AFCD for approval prior to the commencement of the project. The plan should include details regarding the running of the project, including but not limited to details about supervisory personnel, emergency information, information about carers, locations where dogs will be neutered, vaccines to be used, methods of capture and transport, type(s) of food to be provided, etc.

iii. Catching of the dogs

12. The carers and staff of PC who are assigned to conduct dog-catching operations shall be well-trained on environmental safety, animal behaviour and dog catching methods.

13. The project shall cover all stray dogs in the designated area, including feral and semi-feral dogs and their offspring, irrespective of whether they are already in the area at the start of the project or move into the area during the project period (hereafter referred to as “subject dogs”). PC shall catch the subject dogs actively throughout the project period and shall aim at catching at least 80% of these dogs within the first six months of the project.

14. If a carer is bitten by a subject dog, or if it comes to a carer’s knowledge that a person has been bitten by a subject dog, the carer concerned must report the incident to the Police, AFCD and PC within 24 hours of such an incident.

iv. Screening of the dogs

15. All subject dogs caught by PC in the designated area shall be transported safely and directly to PC’s designated veterinary clinic for assessments. Veterinary examination shall be performed by a registered veterinary surgeon⁴ and behavioural assessments including temperament assessment shall be performed by either a veterinary surgeon or a dog trainer endorsed by a registered veterinary surgeon and recognised by PC. The temperament assessment method shall be endorsed by AFCD.

⁴ Registered veterinary surgeon – veterinary surgeon registered under the Veterinary Surgeons Ordinance, Cap. 529.

16. Aggressive dogs or dogs with serious disease shall not be returned to the designated area and shall be referred to AFCD for appropriate follow up actions. For other subject dogs caught by PC in the designated area, they should be handled by PC for rehabilitation, rehoming or returning to the area – the course of action will be dependent on animal welfare, prognosis and public health factors.

17. If the subject dog is found with a microchip or appears to be well-socialised or is suspected to have an owner, it will be held in the facilities of PC or referred to the relevant Animal Management Centre (AMC) of AFCD until ownership status is verified.

18. If the subject dog is found to be owned, it will be returned to its owner. Unowned dogs will be rehomed if they are healthy and of an appropriate temperament. They may also be selected for the project and be put back to the designated area.

v. Treatment and identification of the dogs

19. All the subject dogs assessed to be suitable and selected for the project will be given prophylactic treatments against various parasites such as intestinal worms, heartworms, fleas and ticks, anti-rabies vaccination and other vaccines for the control of parvovirus infection, canine distemper, hepatitis and leptospirosis by PC. They will also be neutered, photographed and microchipped before returning to the designated area. In addition to a microchip, a visual marker shall also be put on the dog for easy identification after returning to the designated area. It is a statutory requirement for such an identification mark to be affixed to the subject dogs for exemption from certain provisions of the Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Cap. 167D), the Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421) and the Rabies Regulation (Cap. 421A)⁵.

20. After the dog is released to the designated area, the carers or staff of PC shall, where possible, conduct daily monitoring of the dog for a period of seven days.

⁵ See section 4 of the Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Exemption) Notice (Cap. 167 sub leg. F) and sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Rabies (TNR Programme)(Exemption) Notice (Cap. 421 sub leg. C)

D. COMPLAINT HANDLING

21. During the project period, any complaint of animal nuisance regardless of whether it is inside or outside the designated area will continue to be handled by AFCD, which will inform and involve PC in assessment, mediation and remedial action regarding the complaints. Any subject dogs caught in response to complaints will be returned to PC or held at the respective AMC. The dogs concerned will only be released back to the designated area if they are deemed to be suitable after a joint assessment by PC and AFCD.

22. Any subject dogs which are involved in biter cases will be removed from the designated area. AFCD will then handle these dogs under the established procedures for biter cases involving stray dogs.

E. RECORD KEEPING

23. The carer shall assist in filling in records related to their feeding activities, dog catching activities and post-neuter monitoring. PC shall keep a database of the population survey including photos of all subject dogs identified during the project period. These photos must be able to show the identifiable features of the concerned dogs. The database shall also comprise all veterinary examination reports, temperament assessment reports, microchip numbers, vaccination records, date of neutering and any medical treatment given to individual subject dogs during the project period. Any subject dogs noted to be missing, found dead, being put under the rehoming scheme or euthanised shall also be properly recorded.

24. PC shall maintain a complete record of complaints and enquiries lodged by the local residents and other organisations, as well as subject dogs returned by AFCD after complaint investigations. The records shall also contain follow-up actions taken in response to complaints and enquiries received and follow-up actions taken for subject dogs caught by AFCD in response to complaints on animal nuisance. AFCD will similarly keep the relevant details of complaints received and details of all actions taken in relation to such subject dogs. As AFCD will in most, if not all, cases involve PC in handling complaints, the records of AFCD and PC altogether would present a comprehensive picture of all complaints handled.

25. PC's reports shall be available in electronic format and shall be provided to AFCD for reference and analysis on a quarterly basis. The

quarterly report should include indicators for assessing the performance of the project, including but not limited to subject dogs' health condition, body condition score, any interactions with other dogs or human, number of pregnant or lactating dogs, puppies, numbers found dead, numbers being put under the rehoming scheme or euthanized, etc. If PC fails to submit the required reports to AFCD within a month upon request, a written warning will be issued to PC. Failures in submitting reports two months after the reporting period on three occasions shall automatically lead to suspension of the project. AFCD will pass on similar relevant information in the same timeframe to PC.

26. A joint meeting between AFCD and PC will be held quarterly in the first two years to review data, to fine-tune, if necessary, the operation procedures and to resolve any issues that may arise. Then the joint meeting may be held biannually if the project is running smooth during the project period. Additional meetings will be arranged, if necessary. AFCD may request the presence of the carers at such meetings and it will be PC's responsibility to ensure that the carers are available on such occasions.

F. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

27. AFCD will monitor the field work and records compiled by PC in the designated area during the project period.

28. Prior to the commencement of the project, AFCD will develop in consultation with PC a scientifically and statistically sound assessment methodology to evaluate the performance of the project. Parameters for assessment may include the following –

- (a) percentage of subject dogs caught within the first six months of the project;
- (b) reduction of stray dog population in the designated area – which will be benchmarked against the territory-wide trend of reduction of stray dogs caught in response to complaints in the whole of Hong Kong;
- (c) reduction of dog-related nuisance complaints in and around the designated area – which will be benchmarked against the territory-wide trend in the changes in the number of related complaints;

- (d) animal health and welfare conditions of the subject dogs; and
- (e) number of new dog found in the designated area.

G. SUSPENSION / TERMINATION

29. The project period is to be agreed upon between AFCD and PC and is subject to review during the period. In order to safeguard public health and safety, the project will be immediately terminated upon the confirmation of the emergence of a rabies outbreak or a zoonotic disease in Hong Kong during the project period where transmission by stray dogs plays a role in the disease epidemiology. The project will be suspended if any of the following conditions arise –

- (a) significant increase in the number of complaints concerning animal nuisance or animal welfare in respect of the project; or
- (b) fatal or serious accident(s) caused by one or more subject dogs.

During the suspension period, AFCD and PC will work together to derive possible remedial actions. If it is not possible to come up with feasible solutions to prevent future occurrence of these incidents, the project will be terminated.

30. AFCD may also require PC to suspend the project if any of the following conditions arise –

- (a) there are procedural irregularities or non-compliance with the agreed protocol by PC; or
- (b) the relevant District Council or local community groups have withdrawn their support to the programme.

During the suspension period, AFCD will make the best endeavour to work with PC and other parties to resolve the issues. If mediation and remedial action fails, then the project will be terminated.

31. Both AFCD and PC may request to suspend or terminate the project for a variety of unforeseen circumstances with justifications. Nevertheless, such a decision will not be taken lightly and either party should be alerted to any such impending potential issues well in advance.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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