

AVA Vision



Issue 1 • 2014

Local Manufacturer Adopts Technology to Produce Okara Floss for Sale

Strong industry interest at AVA's okara seminar and showcase leads to successful commercialisation of the okara floss.

In 2013, AVA successfully converted okara, a soy by-product, into mock meat floss. We shared this technology with industry stakeholders during a seminar, and showcased various okara products during the Urban Sustainability R&D Congress 2013.

Following this, AVA assisted a local company – Cecilia Minced & Dried Pork Food Trading – in adopting this technology in its factory. The company has begun manufacturing and selling small quantities of okara floss since November 2013.

Mr Koh Hock Bin, Managing Director of Cecilia Minced and Dried Pork Trading said: "When AVA introduced the okara conversion technology during the seminar, I became very interested, as that was the first successful attempt in Singapore. We are currently looking for suitable machinery to mass produce this product for foodservice users. At the same time, we are researching on ways to add okara to flour and make confectionery."

At least 30 metric tonnes of okara, a by-product formed during the manufacturing of soy milk and tofu, is discarded daily. This food waste is rich in protein and carbohydrates, which makes it ideal for recycling into nutritious food products. AVA and its collaborators have also successfully converted okara into other mock meat products and animal feed.

The development of this technology is part of AVA's efforts in ensuring Singapore's food supply chain is integrated, cost-effective, and sustainable. These include collaborating with renowned research institutions and key industry stakeholders to develop innovative products, optimise productivity, improve product quality and shelf life, as well as minimise food wastage.



Cecilia Minced and Dried Pork Trading has successfully adopted the okara conversion technology to produce okara floss with seaweed.



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More Choices of Safe Beef Imports for Singapore

UK's deboned beef from cattle under 30 months old, as well as Japan's deboned and bone-in beef from cattle of all ages, is allowed into Singapore after passing AVA's food safety risk assessments and reviews.

AVA has partially lifted the import ban on UK beef. Deboned beef from cattle under 30 months of age has been approved for import into Singapore.

Prior to this approval, imports of all beef and beef products from the UK had been suspended since 1996, due to the outbreak of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (also known as BSE or mad cow disease). BSE is a fatal brain disorder of cattle, and evidence shows links between the consumption of infected cattle meat and an increased risk of a brain-degenerating disease (variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or vCJD) in humans.

Following AVA's food safety risk assessment in 2013, BSE control measures in the UK were found to be consistent with safety guidelines as specified by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The UK's application to export beef to Singapore was also thoroughly evaluated to ensure proper documentation for traceability and veterinary health certification.

To further determine the safety of UK beef, AVA conducted an on-site inspection in July 2013, and verified that the BSE situation in the UK is well under control. During the inspection trip, several UK beef establishments were examined to ascertain that their sanitary practices and veterinary public health standards meet AVA's stringent requirements, and that BSE control measures are adequately implemented.

After the inspection, AVA concluded that there is negligible risk of BSE introduction from UK's deboned beef derived from cattle under 30 months of age. As such, the ban was partially lifted after 17 years to allow imports of this category of beef product. Currently, seven beef slaughterhouse establishments that met our standards have been approved to export this category of beef product to Singapore.

REVISION OF BEEF IMPORT CONDITIONS FOR JAPAN

Beef from Japan was banned in September 2001 after the first case of BSE was detected in the country. Since then, only deboned beef from cattle under 30 months old was allowed for import to Singapore.

In late 2013, following a review of Japan's BSE case history, as well as the control measures it currently has in place, AVA ascertained that BSE control measures in Japan are consistent with OIE guidelines. It was also concluded that there is negligible risk of BSE introduction from Japan's beef.

As such, in addition to deboned beef under 30 months old, AVA has also allowed imports of deboned and bone-in beef from cattle of all ages from Japan. The import approval for offal from Japan is also being considered. AVA is currently working with Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to finalise the veterinary health certificate conditions for this product.



Inspection at a UK beef slaughterhouse by AVA officials: From left, Dr Chew Siang Thai (Deputy CEO & Director-General for Regulatory Programmes & Operations), Dr Astrid Yeo (Group Director for Regulatory Administration & Food Establishment Regulation), and far right, Dr Leong Hon Keong (Director for Risk Assessment & Epidemiology Department).

Why does AVA ban certain imports and when are these bans lifted?

As the national authority for food safety, AVA suspends import sources that fail to meet our internationally recognised standards. At the same time, we must also secure an undisrupted and sufficient supply of food to feed the nation, without compromising food safety.

It is a delicate balance between food safety and supply that AVA maintains through a risk-based approach. In this approach, food safety risks are assessed and appropriate mitigation measures are implemented. Through the accreditation of sources, as well as inspection and surveillance programmes, AVA constantly monitors the food imported and produced locally for hazards.

Import bans will only be lifted when the food source has successfully eliminated the hazards and met AVA's food safety standards. This way, Singapore is assured of food that is both safe to consume and diversified in sources.

Streamlined Inspection of Australian Chilled Pork

Pilot programme reviews procedures that previously required all chilled pork consignments to be detained and inspected for food safety. Now, only one consignment from one importer is detained for inspection, and other consignments originating from the same production batch and establishment can be released immediately upon arrival.

Singapore imports about 8,000 tonnes of chilled pork each year. To ensure food safety, all consignments were previously subject to a detain-and-inspect procedure before they could be released for sale. More than 90 percent of this quantity comes from Australia's 13 AVA-accredited establishments.

Over the past years, our inspection and surveillance records showed that these establishments have constantly maintained a high standard of food safety and have continued to meet AVA's stringent import requirements.

We also observed that different local importers often separately bring in consignments that are from the same batch of chilled pork produced by the same establishment in Australia. In such cases, AVA officers had to detain and inspect every consignment from various importers, although these consignments all originated from the same source.

To improve the efficiency of our inspection programme without compromising food safety, AVA piloted a programme in October 2013 to streamline the import processes for Australian chilled pork. Local importers of chilled pork had earlier been consulted

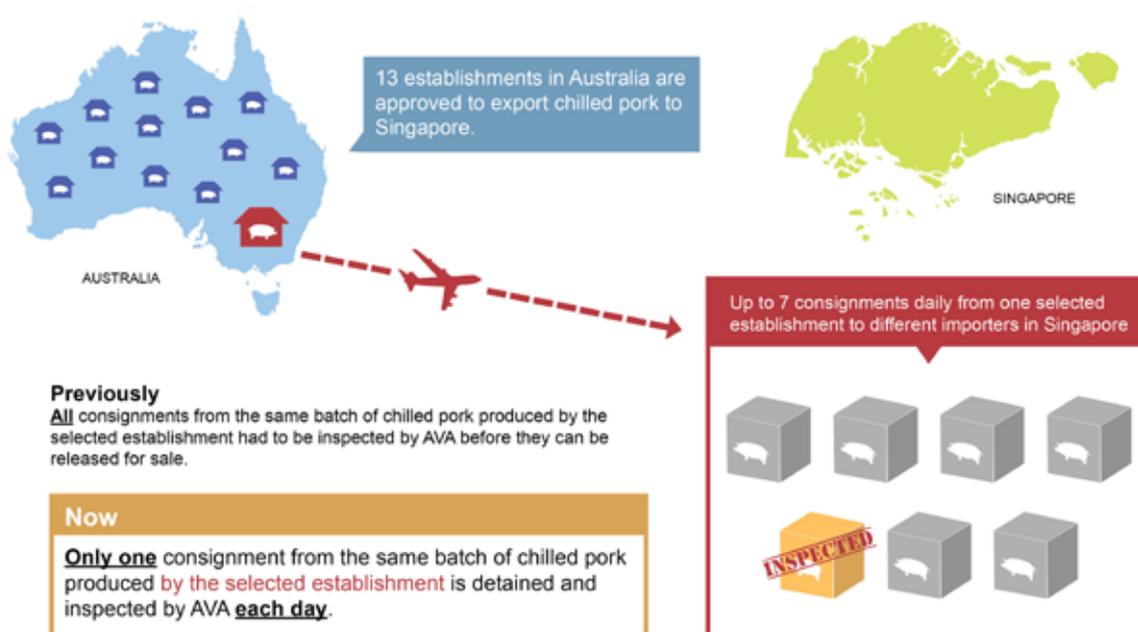
on the proposed changes, and their concerns were taken into consideration.

In this pilot, only one consignment of chilled pork from one selected establishment in Australia is subjected to inspection on each day. The establishment was selected because it has consistently complied with AVA's requirements. Singapore imports an average of 25 consignments from this establishment weekly, and as many as seven consignments in a day.

To further ensure food safety, AVA inspects one consignment from a different importer every day, so that all importers are checked and covered under this pilot programme. In addition, we continue to work closely with all importers to ensure the pork products in all uninspected consignments are safe for consumption as well.

To date, the compliance rate of chilled pork from the selected establishment remains high. The pilot programme has been well-received by importers who can now enjoy savings in cost and time. AVA continues to monitor this pilot programme to ensure food safety and operational efficiency. If the pilot proves to be successful, we may expand the streamlined inspection process to include all AVA-accredited chilled pork establishments in Australia.

Pilot Programme to Streamline Inspection of Chilled Pork Imports from Australia



Controlled & Modified Atmosphere Storage & Packaging

In an expert engagement programme organised by AVA, industry stakeholders learn more about new techniques that help to extend the shelf-life of fresh produce.

In a globalised marketplace, cross-border and trans-continent shipment of food is common. This is especially true for Singapore, which imports more than 90 percent of its food. Due to the distance involved, the transport time taken can cause quality variance and deterioration in the fresh produce we import, resulting in food wastage.

AVA is constantly exploring new and emerging technologies that allow food to be kept safe and fresh for a longer time. More importantly, we work closely with the industry to facilitate the adoption of suitable post-harvest methods in their processes.

Examples of such technology are the Controlled Atmosphere (CA) and Modified Atmosphere (MA) methods for storage and packaging. By coupling both methods with a good refrigeration system, the shelf-life of fresh fruits and vegetables can be extended. With this technology, local importers and manufacturers may also increase the shelf-life of products made using fresh produce, or create value-added products for export.

CA and MA methods involve adjusting or maintaining an atmospheric composition within an air-tight storage room, container, or packaging. The level of gases, such as carbon dioxide and oxygen, are typically altered to suit the natural respiration of fruits and vegetables.

The key features and major benefits of CA storage and MA packaging were shared with 85 industry stakeholders during an expert engagement programme held on 22-24 October 2013. AVA invited an expert in this area, Dr Andrew East from the Massey University, to jointly conduct training and service extension services to participants. In addition, a seminar was included as part of the programme, to cover topics on MA gases, the application of MA in storage, distribution, packaging, as well as food safety and consumer perceptions on CA and MA.



Pears are packed in Modified Atmosphere bags before being placed in carton boxes for transport from Patagonia, South America to Singapore.



An expert on Controlled Atmosphere and Modified Atmosphere methods from the Massey University, Dr Andrew East, spoke to 85 stakeholders on the applications of the Modified Atmosphere technology.



As part of the expert engagement programme, Dr Andrew East and AVA officers provided on-site advice on Controlled Atmosphere and Modified Atmosphere applications.



Participants actively seeking clarifications on the points raised by Dr Andrew East.

AVA Combats Trafficking & Illegal Possession of Wildlife in Singapore

\$6.76 million worth of endangered wildlife products and 32 wild animals are seized in four enforcement cases.

Annually, international wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars. To ensure that this trade does not threaten the survival of wild animals and plants, governments work together through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to safeguard certain species from over-exploitation.

Singapore is a signatory to CITES, and AVA is responsible for its implementation and enforcement here. Under the Endangered

Species (Import and Export) Act, the maximum penalty for illegal trade (import, export and re-export) of wildlife listed under CITES is a fine of \$50,000 per scheduled specimen (not exceeding an aggregate of \$500,000) and/or imprisonment of up to two years. The same penalty applies to any transshipment as well as illegal acquisition or possession.

During the period from October 2013 to February 2014, AVA acted on four cases of smuggling and illegal possession of wildlife.

#1 INTERDICTION: WILDLIFE SMUGGLING VIA SINGAPORE

Operation Date: 30 October 2013 & 13-14 November 2013	
Wildlife product involved: Red sandalwood	CITES classification: Appendix II The Red sandalwood is a threatened species and its trade is regulated. Commercial trade is allowed only with proper CITES permits.
Quantity seized: 45 tonnes	Value of seized goods: \$5 million
	Items: 1,329 logs of red sandalwood
Case details: Three 40-foot containers, transiting through Singapore from India, were interdicted when they arrived in Singapore from India. The consignments were declared as “hot lime pickles” and “casting wheels”. Acting on a tip-off, AVA and Singapore Customs officials conducted the investigation and seized the 45 tonnes of red sandalwood, making this the largest seizure since 2011.	
Case status: AVA is working with local and international agencies to investigate this case.	

#2 INTERDICTION: WILDLIFE SMUGGLING VIA SINGAPORE

Operation Date: 14 January 2014	
Wildlife involved: Ivory	CITES classification: Appendix I Elephants are highly endangered and could be extinct if their trade is not severely restricted. Trade for primarily commercial purposes is generally prohibited.
Quantity seized: 45 kg	Value of seized goods: \$60,000
	
Items: 13 pieces of elephant tusks, 16 pieces of ivory bangles and 109 pieces of ivory cubes	
Case details: Aviation screening officers at the Singapore Changi Airport detected two luggage bags with suspected elephant ivory. The bags had arrived in a flight from Dubai and were in transit to Laos via Singapore. Two Vietnamese men, who owned the bags, were immediately arrested.	
Case status: On 22 January 2014, these two Vietnamese men were each sentenced to 16 months in jail for smuggling African elephant ivory through Singapore.	

The Singapore Government does not condone the use of Singapore as a conduit to smuggle endangered species and their parts and products. AVA will not hesitate to take harsh enforcement actions against any person or company that smuggles wildlife through Singapore. AVA will continue to cooperate and collaborate with partner enforcement agencies nationally and internationally to curb wildlife trafficking.

Anyone with information on illegal wildlife trade may contact AVA via telephone number 6325 7625 or via AVA's online feedback form.

While AVA continues to ensure that regulatory measures against illegal wildlife activities are in place and properly enforced, the public can play their part too. Should members of the public have information on illegal wildlife activities, please also contact AVA immediately.

All information shared with AVA would be kept strictly confidential.

#3 INTERDICTION: WILDLIFE SMUGGLING VIA SINGAPORE

Operation Date: 10 January 2014	
Wildlife involved: Rhinoceros horns	CITES classification: Appendix I Rhinoceroses are highly endangered and could be extinct if their trade is not severely restricted. Trade for primarily commercial purposes is generally prohibited. Specimens, including horns, are also included.
Quantity seized: 21.5 kg	Value of seized goods: \$1.7 million
 Photo: Wildlife Reserves Singapore	Items: 8 rhinoceros horns
Case details: Aviation screening officers at the Singapore Changi Airport detected a luggage bag with suspected rhinoceros horns. Upon further investigation, AVA found eight pieces of rhinoceros horns in the checked-in luggage bag. The owner of the bag, a 22-year-old Vietnamese national, was immediately arrested. Investigations revealed that the accused had travelled to Mozambique to purchase the rhinoceros horns to be brought back to Vietnam for sale. To evade checks, he also travelled to other African countries before taking a flight from Uganda to Vietnam via Dubai, Singapore and Laos, with Vietnam as his final destination.	
Case status: On 16 January 2014, the Vietnamese man was sentenced to 15 months in jail for smuggling rhinoceros horns through Singapore.	

#4 SEIZURE: POSSESSION OF ILLEGAL WILDLIFE

Operation Date: 3 January 2014	
Wildlife involved: Wild and endangered animals	CITES classification: Appendix III These species are considered endangered in some countries and specimens from these countries are protected under CITES. Import of such species requires a Certificate of Origin, or in the case of the species being imported from a country which has included that species in Appendix III, a CITES export permit is required.
Quantity seized: 32 wild animals, out of which 19 were classified as endangered species	Value of seized goods: N.A.
	
Items: Including the Ornate Horned Frog, Yellow-footed Tortoise, Slow Loris, and Black-tailed Prairie Dog.	
Case details: Acting on a public tip off, AVA inspected a HDB flat and seized 32 wild animals from the flat. Investigations by AVA showed that all the animals were imported into Singapore without the relevant import permits.	
Case status: On 6 February 2014, a man was fined \$41,000 for the possession of illegal wildlife. This is the highest penalty that has been meted out to an individual for the possession of illegal wildlife.	

Capability Development for Local Aquaculture Industry

Republic Polytechnic launches new Marine Science and Aquaculture diploma programme to attract and nurture local talents for the aquaculture industry. AVA further complements this effort by providing internship opportunities to these students.

AVA has set a target of 15 percent of all the fish we consume to be produced locally. At the farm level, there is also a minimum production level of 17 tonnes of fish per half-hectare sea space per year. To meet these targets, our local fish farming industry faces significant challenges in the limited land and sea space available, as well as a shortage of local manpower.

To address labour challenges, AVA has been partnering the Ministry of Manpower and Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) in organising career briefs and job fairs for fisheries and other farming sectors to recruit local workers. To attract and nurture more young Singaporeans to join the industry, the Republic Polytechnic launched its new Diploma in Marine Science and Aquaculture this year. The Aquaria – Republic Polytechnic’s Aquaculture Centre – was also officially opened by Minister of State for National Development and Defence, Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, on 9 January 2014.

He said: “It is important to develop the manpower capability to help transform the industry and achieve higher productivity. I am glad that Republic Polytechnic supports and nurtures the aquaculture industry by training a pool of skilled professionals for the future.”

AVA also supports the industry in capability development. Two students from Republic Polytechnic are currently on internship at AVA, and are involved in projects to study parasites in locally farmed food fish and feed nutrition for the growth of guppies. Dr Mohamad Maliki added: “I am confident that their project findings would come in handy for the industry.”



Photo: Republic Polytechnic

Minister of State for National Development and Defence, Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman and CEO of AVA, Ms Tan Poh Hong (far right) at the opening of Republic Polytechnic’s Aquaculture Centre.

Helping the Region’s Fisheries Boost Efficiency

AVA collaborates with a research institute to develop a low-cost, simple-to-operate, and efficient fish de-scaler prototype for fisheries that are using traditional farming methods in the region.

With a mission to ensure a resilient supply of safe food for Singapore, AVA constantly keeps a look out for more food types to import from existing and new sources. In addition, we have been leveraging on agricultural technology to help our farms raise productivity and contribute to meeting the nation’s demand.

Increasingly, we are also extending our R&D expertise to Singapore’s neighbours. In helping neighbouring countries overcome their limitations in intensive farming and post-harvest technology, they will in turn become new sources of safe food imports for Singapore.

AVA began collaborating with the National University of Singapore’s Institute for Engineering Leadership (IEL) in 2012 to research on ways to help emerging economies create effective post-harvest solutions at a low cost. One of these economies is Southern Sumatra’s aquaculture industry, which has been using inefficient post-harvest methods for various processes, such as the de-scaling of fishes.

Under the collaboration, a low-cost and simple-to operate-fish de-scaler prototype is built to allow fishes to be processed quickly, safely, and hygienically at source. Its simplified processes can be easily handled by low-skilled workers, and the developers also ensured that the machine is not built to be too complicated, so as to minimise maintenance cost. Work is also underway to design a hand-held hybrid of the prototype.



The low-cost and simple-to operate-fish de-scaler prototype is built to allow fishes to be processed quickly, safely, and hygienically at source.

Raising Food Traceability Capabilities for ASEAN Aquaculture Industries

AVA organises a workshop for ASEAN member countries, including lectures by an expert speaker and an on-site visit, to enhance regional capabilities in aquaculture product traceability.

AVA manages the Marine Fisheries Research Department (MFRD) of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC). Programmes under MFRD cover the areas of biotoxins monitoring, utilisation of freshwater fish for value-added products, as well as traceability systems for aquaculture products in ASEAN.

Traceability is a component of a food safety management system. It tracks any food, feed, food-producing animal or substance that will be used for consumption, through all stages of production, processing, and distribution. In the US and EU, traceability is now an import requirement for aquaculture products. Furthermore, as consumer awareness on food traceability grows, the demand of "traceable" food increases.

On 5-7 November 2013, AVA successfully organised a second regional training workshop on traceability systems for ASEAN aquaculture products. Held in Thailand, this workshop focused on shrimps, while the first one held last year in Vietnam centred on fishes.

This workshop provided a platform for ASEAN member countries to share experiences, with an objective to enhance the region's capability in implementing traceability systems for aquaculture products. A food traceability expert from the region, Mr Vincent Andre from AETS-consultants, was invited to provide a series of lectures and facilitate discussions during breakout sessions.

Topics such as the definitions of traceability according to Codex Alimentarius and ISO standards, as well as the market requirements to develop and implement a traceability system, were covered. In addition, a field trip was conducted, where participants studied the technical approach and structure of an electronic traceability system for shrimps put in place by the Charoen Pokphand (CP) Group – one of Thailand's largest seafood companies involved in the whole supply chain from shrimp hatchery and farming to shrimp product processing.



Participants from 10 ASEAN-SEAFDEC member countries, AVA, MFRD, along with Mr Hajime Kawamura (SEAFDEC Deputy Secretary-General), Mr Hidenao Watanabe (SEAFDEC Assistant Trust Fund Manager), Mr Tadahiro Kawata (SEAFDEC Technical Coordinator), and food traceability expert, Mr Vincent Andre (AETS-consultants).

New & Revised Regulatory Measures for Responsible Pet Ownership

New pet licensing conditions for retailers and revised dog licensing fees for owners in effect from January and February 2014, respectively.

Pets are a lifetime commitment and owners have the responsibility to care for and ensure the health of their pets. A lack of commitment may lead to pet abandonment, which in turn adds to the stray problem in our community.

Over the years, AVA has been educating the public on responsible pet ownership and ways to create a harmonious living space for both humans and animals. Measures such as compulsory dog licensing also contribute towards ensuring responsible pet ownership and animal health.



Besides efforts by the government and pet owners, the industry has a part to play too. To foster greater responsibility in the pet industry in ensuring animal welfare and promoting responsible pet ownership, AVA added two new licensing conditions for pet retailers selling cats, dogs and rabbits. Dog licence fees have also been revised to encourage pet sterilisation.

NEW LICENSING CONDITIONS FOR PET RETAILERS SELLING CATS, DOGS AND RABBITS

Effective 1 January 2014, these two new licensing conditions will help reduce impulse buying of pets by children and ensure potential buyers understand the implications and responsibilities of being a pet owner. They are also aimed to minimise the downstream problems of pet abandonment or poor pet care:

1) No sale of pets to individuals under 16 years old

Under the revised licensing conditions, pet retailers will not be allowed to sell a pet dog, cat or rabbit to any individual below 16 years old. Children below the age of 16 must be accompanied by their parents or legal guardian to buy a pet cat, dog or rabbit.

2) Mandatory pre-sale screening for each transaction

Under the revised licensing conditions, pet retailers are required to assess the suitability of their customers as pet owners prior to sale of the pet animal. As part of the pre-sale screening process, both potential pet buyers and pet retailers have to complete the Pet Purchase Declaration (PPD) form.

The PPD form has been distributed to all affected pet retailers. In addition, AVA has instituted a six-month grace period until 30 June 2014 to allow pet retailers to adjust and comply with these new licensing conditions. Following which, AVA would take enforcement action against non-compliant pet retailers.



Potential pet buyers now have to complete a Pet Purchase Declaration form as part of the mandatory pre-sale screening, before they can bring home a pet.

Positive Response from Industry

Ms Shirley Tan from Love Pet Pte Ltd welcomes these new requirements. She said, "Besides me, a lot of my customers are happy about this minimum age requirement. It is a way to ensure responsible pet ownership."

Ms Tan is also receptive towards the pre-screening process and requirement for PPD forms to be filled out. In the past, this was done in an informal manner at her shop and customers would come back with more questions on pet care when necessary. "Now, there is some extra administrative work involved in completing the PPD forms but we are definitely okay with it," she added.

These new licensing conditions were developed in consultation with stakeholders such as the Pets Enterprises and Traders Association and pet retailers, and in line with the Animal Welfare Legislative Review Committee's recommendations made in March 2013. AVA is currently working actively with the industry and animal welfare groups to raise public awareness of these new conditions, as well as look into operational and enforcement issues that may arise.



AVA requires all pet dogs to be licensed and encourages dog owners to sterilise their dogs to prevent unwanted breeding.

DOG LICENCE FEES REVISED TO ENCOURAGE PET STERILISATION

Licensing establishes accountability for the care and management of dogs by pet owners. It also facilitates contact tracing in the event of a rabies outbreak. Rabies is a fatal viral disease which can be transmitted to humans by the bite of a rabid animal, and dogs are considered to be highly significant vectors for the spread of rabies. For these reasons, AVA requires all pet dogs to be licensed.

In addition, AVA encourages dog owners to sterilise their dogs

to prevent unwanted breeding, which could contribute to abandonment and public safety issues.

From 1 February 2014, owners of non-sterilised dogs are required to pay higher licence fees that have been raised from \$70 to \$90. This makes it even more expensive for pet owners to renew or apply for a new licence for non-sterilised dogs.

Licence fees for sterilised dogs have increased minimally from \$14 to \$15. Licence fees for the fourth and subsequent dogs (sterilised/non-sterilised) were brought up from \$175 to \$180.

AVA works with our animal welfare partners to re-home impounded stray dogs and will continue to waive the first-year licence fees for dogs released from AVA's pound to our animal welfare partners for re-homing.

Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership in the Community

From roadshows to free pet health checks, AVA drives home the importance of responsible pet ownership.

At the Pet Expo and Animals & Our Community Roadshow held during February-March 2014, AVA reached out to the public to promote various responsible pet ownership messages, such as: "A Pet is a Lifetime Commitment", "Take Care of Your Pet" and "Be a Considerate Pet Owner".

At both events, AVA organised adoption drives that featured animal welfare groups and the animals they were putting up for adoption. In total, more than 50 dogs, hamsters, guinea pigs, and rabbits were successfully adopted.

In addition, educational colouring activities were available for children. Goodie bags containing collaterals with responsible pet ownership messages were also given out to visitors who completed the specified activities at the event.



Booths of animal welfare groups and adoption drives at the Animals & Our Community Roadshow, organised by AVA on 8-9 March 2014.

PET EXPO

Minister of State for National Development, Mr Desmond Lee, launched the three-day Pet Expo, which was organised by International Exhibitions Group, on 28 February 2014. He spoke of the event as "an excellent opportunity for people with different backgrounds and different experiences in animal issues to exchange viewpoints and ideas".

He continued: "We can establish partnerships, and channel our energies positively towards the cause of animal welfare, because this is indeed a reflection of who we are as a society."



A loving moment: Minister of State for National Development, Mr Desmond Lee, plants a kiss on a dog that is put up for adoption by Animal Lovers' League at the Pet Expo.

LAUNCH OF AVA'S FREE PET HEALTH CHECK SERIES

Mr Lee also graced the launch of a pet health event on 15 February 2014. This is part of a series of pet health checks that will be conducted for free to communities in various parts of Singapore.



Mr Lee says the Pet Expo is an excellent opportunity for people with different backgrounds and different experiences in animal issues to exchange viewpoints and ideas.



Clinical examinations are conducted for free by private vets during the event.

Debuted by AVA, in collaboration with private veterinarians and local polytechnics, this initiative serves to educate pet owners on preventive pet care and inculcate the importance of routine veterinary care for pets. About 75 pet owners participated in the first of the series of free pet health checks at the Jurong Spring Community Club. Services such as clinical examination and microchipping of pets, veterinary advice and recommendations, as well as dog licensing, were available.

Some nine private veterinarians from five clinics in the Jurong GRC volunteered their services to carry out free clinical examinations, with the assistance of 20 veterinary technician students from Temasek Polytechnic. Dog owners were able to apply for a licence on that day.

In addition, free microchipping services, which otherwise would cost approximately \$50, were offered to pet owners. Microchipping is a form of identification for pets, and carries unique microchip numbers that will assist in reuniting lost pets with their owners. Dogs are also required to be microchipped as part of AVA's licensing conditions.



Mr Lee scans a dog for its microchip number during the free pet health check event. From left in the background: AVA CEO, Ms Tan Poh Hong and Group Director for Agri Establishment Regulation, Dr Wong Hon Mun.

Besides these essential services, AVA officers and private veterinarians also provided preventive pet care information in various areas, such as vaccination, de-worming, and handling common pet diseases.

AVA CEO, Ms Tan Poh Hong, said: "I would like to thank our partners for supporting AVA and I hope to see more pet owners coming forward to participate in the free pet health check."

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