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to AVA Board

AVAVISION

Issue 2/2018

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A BRIDGE BETWEEN HUMANS & CATS

AVA appoints Cat Welfare Society as mediator for cat-related issues in the community.



AVA, in its First Responder role, handles animal-related feedback from the public. As these issues are often complex, we adopt a multi-stakeholder and multi-pronged approach to manage them. To this end, AVA has been working closely with animal welfare groups in co-managing such issues, to achieve a harmonious environment for both humans and animals.

In 2017, we received over 4,000 cases of feedback on cat-related issues, such as irresponsible feeding, soiling, caterwauling, roaming, and damage to property. Since 2015, Cat Welfare Society (CWS) has been helping to mediate cat-related disputes raised by residents, as

well as advising community cat feeders and cat owners to practise responsible cat feeding and pet ownership.

To formalise our existing collaboration with CWS, on 7 May 2018, AVA announced that it has appointed CWS as its third-party mediator for cat-related issues. Under this partnership, there will be service delivery standards imposed, for example, in terms of response time to a case. If a solution cannot be found immediately, there will be an explanation to the feedback provider about why the issue requires further study, as well as an action plan to address the issue in the long term.

“CWS plays an active role in supporting us to manage cat-related issues on the ground.”

Ms Jessica Kwok, Group Director for Animal Management, AVA

■ A cat in the community (Photo: Cat Welfare Society)



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WHO ARE THE MEDIATORS?



■ Laura Ann Meranda (Executive Director, CWS) stroking a community cat while on her rounds as a mediator for cat-related issues. (Photo: Cat Welfare Society)

When is Mediation Required?

When parties, usually between a feedback provider and the cat owner or community feeder, are unable to come to an amiable agreement and understanding on how cat issues are addressed and managed. For such cases, it is preferable to have an appointed mediator to bring the affected parties together to reach an amicable solution.

Mediation also includes education, where mediators provide cat owners and feeders with information on the importance of adopting responsible pet ownership and socially accepted behaviour when dealing with cats.

Mediators from CWS tell us what drives their passions and about their memorable experiences when mediating cat-related disputes.

“ CWS welcomes this opportunity to partner AVA and support them in their response to cat-related issues and feedback in Singapore. As a non-profit organisation that has always stood at the forefront of advocating the humane management of cats, this partnership is acknowledgment of the work that we do and reaffirms the Government’s support for mediation as a preferred means to resolve cat-related disputes in the community.

We expect that there will be increased costs in sterilisation as well as community engagement and outreach arising from this scope of work, so we hope that the public will continue to support us in this endeavour. Together, we believe that we can achieve the twin goals of humane management of the community cat population and responsible cat ownership.

One of my most memorable experiences as a mediator was when a motorcyclist provided feedback that an abandoned cat urinated on his motorcycle and damaged the seat. I communicated with caregivers of stray cats in the area and found preventive ways to deter the cat from marking. I even went as far as to help the motorcyclist wash his bike. We have come across many cases and we always try our best to work towards a win-win situation for humans and cats.

Laura Ann Meranda, Executive Director, CWS

“ I am happiest when community cats are content in their neighbourhood, fed by responsible feeders. Hoarders and negligent pet cat owners who have changed their ways for the better after intervention from AVA and CWS, are also one of my favourite outcomes of mediation.”

Michelle Siau, Senior Mediator, CWS

MANAGERS OF CAT-RELATED FEEDBACK

As first-responders to these feedback, 4 officers from AVA's Domestic Animals Section (DAS) coordinate and collaborate with relevant agencies to ensure timely and effective responses. They share with us examples of success cases and traits of their jobs that keep them going.



■ The “cat” managers (from left): Jessie Soh, Yip Su Jun, Sebastian Tan, and Samuel Quek from AVA, together with Laura Ann Meranda and Michelle Siau from CWS.

“ I remember a case about a stray cat that kept soiling in front of a resident’s premises, even after deterrent measures were taken. Fortunately, after working together with CWS, we managed to find a foster home for the cat. We not only resolved the soiling issue, but also helped the cat find its forever home.”

***Ellyas Dzulkifli,
Executive Manager, DAS, AVA***

“ Being an animal lover, I chose a career in AVA so that I can pursue my interests. The best part of my job is being able to interact with animals on an almost daily basis and observing the different personalities of cats.”

***Yip Su Jun,
Executive Manager, DAS, AVA***

“ Once, there was a feedback provider who was really annoyed with the problems caused by community cats in his estate. Together with relevant stakeholders, such as officers from the Town Council and CWS, we explained to him how such issues are addressed and managed. After that, we continued to update him on the actions taken. Even though the issue was complex and not readily resolved, he was assured that AVA was helping to coordinate efforts to address his concerns. He wrote to us on a few occasions to thank us for our help.”

***Sebastian Tan,
Deputy Director, DAS, AVA***

“ Feedback providers tend to be more receptive to AVA’s advice when they know AVA has been working closely with animal welfare groups. The network that CWS has on the ground with feeders is invaluable. At times, we engage CWS’ help to bring across our messages on responsible cat feeding and cat sterilisation more effectively.”

***Samuel Quek,
Executive Manager, DAS, AVA***



LIVING IN HARMONY WITH ANIMALS

AVA officer Evan Lin handles public feedback on animal-related issues, manages the stray dog population, and works closely with several external stakeholders to do so.



What exactly do you do at work?

Evan Lin, Executive Manager, Domestic Animals Section, AVA:

I handle public feedback on animal-related issues. In doing so, I often collaborate with various stakeholders and external organisations. I initiate meetings and joint inspections with stakeholders—such as town councils, the Housing Development Board, National Environment Agency, National Parks Board, People Association, and animal welfare groups—to manage and address animal-related issues, and work towards achieving an amicable and practical resolution.

Apart from that, I also work with stakeholders to advise and educate the public and pet owners on measures to handle or mitigate nuisance caused by animals. In addition, we partner animal welfare groups and grassroots leaders in addressing issues caused by stray dogs. By engaging and working with stakeholders to achieve common goals, we foster better understanding and rapport.

How does your work help to manage the stray population in Singapore?

We adopt a calibrated, risk-based, multi-pronged approach in managing the stray dog population. At the same time, we have to balance the interests of various stakeholders. As far as possible, we work with our animal welfare partners to re-home these dogs, where conditions allow.

Working closely with animal welfare groups and veterinarians, we will be embarking on a five-year Trap-Neuter-Release-Manage programme to manage the stray dog population in Singapore. The programme is expected to begin in the second half of 2018. The Trap-Neuter-Release-Manage programme involves humanely catching stray dogs and sterilising them. Efforts will be made to re-home as many of the sterilised animals as possible. Those that are unable to be re-homed may be released at suitable locations to live out their lives naturally.

How does the work you do contribute to the well-being and interest of AVA and/or Singapore?

Stray dogs, especially when in a pack, tend to be aggressive and may threaten public safety. In addition, they are susceptible to rabies, which is transmissible to humans through dog bites. Rabies is a serious disease that is almost invariably fatal once symptoms have developed. By managing the stray dog population, we will be able to reduce and prevent these risks.

Share some less well-known facts about your job.

It involves very long and arduous working hours because collaborations and meetings with external stakeholders are often held outside office hours. These are in addition to the cases and projects that I work on during normal office

hours. Thankfully, I have very helpful and understanding colleagues and bosses.

Also, some members of the public lack an awareness of stray dog behaviour and do not know what to do when encountering stray dogs. Although stray dogs may pose a threat to public health and safety, it is possible for us to co-exist with them in harmony. Most stray dogs are scared of humans; they are either quick to stay out of people's way, or may approach and sniff people. When approached by a stray dog, just stay calm, look away, and avoid making loud sounds or sudden movements. These dogs should eventually move away.

What do you find enjoyable/satisfying about your work?

Being a "tourist" here, as I get to travel to different parts of Singapore when attending to cases from all over the country.



■ Evan (2nd from left) with residents during the Sembawang Neighbourhood Committee's 'Citizen on Patrol' walkabout. The residents were able to understand first-hand from our officers, the proper steps to take when encountering stray dogs.

To learn more about what to do when encountering stray dogs, scan to download a brochure





CULTIVATING RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

AVA continues to raise public awareness of pet adoption, responsible pet ownership, and the importance of veterinary pet care at Pet Expo 2018.



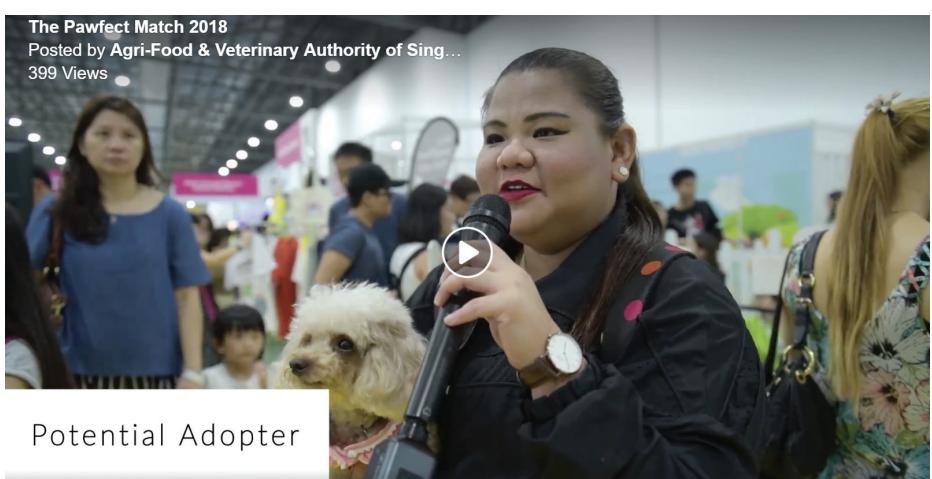
Among the 28,000 visitors at Pet Expo annually, the majority of them are pet owners. Given the event's profile, it is a good platform for AVA to spread our messages on responsible pet ownership. With 2018 being the Lunar Year of the Dog, AVA returned to the public pet fair on 6-8 April with informative exhibits that urged potential dog owners to consider adoption first. Visitors to our booth learned about the factors to consider before getting a pet and how to become a responsible dog owner.

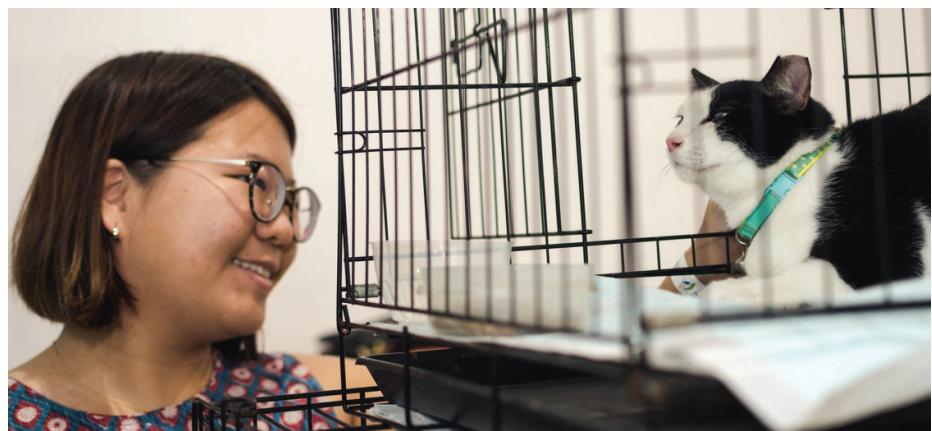
At Pet Expo this year, AVA continued to organise 'The Pawfect Match'.

This "matchmaking" activity allowed prospective pet owners to meet and mingle with some 80 dogs, cats, and rabbits put up for adoption by our animal re-homing partners*. Besides having helped these animals find new homes, these 12 animal welfare groups also raised more than \$15,000 at Pet Expo.

Said a potential pet adopter at 'The Pawfect Match': "It's a good effort because there are a lot of dogs out there that really need homes but people just don't know the avenue to adopt a dog. So with an event like this, awareness is created. So I think it is a very good initiative".

*Scan to watch
more interviews*





Routine veterinary and preventive pet care are important components of responsible pet ownership as well. To raise awareness, AVA offered pet health checks for 210 pets at the event, in partnership with veterinarians from AVA and the private practice[^]. These checks, as well as microchipping services, were provided free-of-charge. More than 40 student volunteers from Ngee Ann Polytechnic assisted with the pet checks, crowd control, and registration for the pet owners. AVA staff and other volunteers also lent their hands to this meaningful exercise.

**Animal Lovers League, Action for Singapore Dogs, Causes for Animals Singapore, Exclusively Mongrels, Noah's Ark CARES, Mercylight, Oasis Second Chance Animal Shelter, SOSD Singapore, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Voices For Animals, Cat Welfare Society, and House Rabbit Society Singapore.*

[^]We thank Dr Lidia Cammack, Dr Carmen Lee, Dr Simon Quek, Dr Ong Weijun, Dr Andrew Wang, Dr Enoka Bandularatne, Dr Tai Yesun, Dr Rockey Fong, Dr Daphne Ang, and Dr Asha Radicic for volunteering their time and expertise to conduct the pet health checks for free.



FIGHTING ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

AVA works with U.S. expert in using DNA analysis to tackle ivory smuggling and elephant poaching problems upstream.



AVA has been working closely with local and international partners to act on illegal wildlife trade and smuggling, be it into or through Singapore. On 5 March 2018, AVA and the Immigrations Checkpoints Authority seized a container of illegal elephant ivory, which weighed about 3.5 tonnes. The shipment, declared to contain groundnuts, originated from Nigeria and was to be re-exported to Vietnam.

This was the second largest haul of illegal elephant ivory in Singapore in a decade. For this amount of ivory, it would mean that at least 850 elephants were poached and killed. According to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), more African elephants are being killed for ivory than there are being born. Approximately 60% of elephant deaths are at the hands of poachers.

■ Dr Samuel Wasser (right), along with officers from the University of Washington and U.S. Homeland Security Investigations, studying one of the 1,787 pieces of elephant ivory tusks seized in Singapore.

Steps to Take Elephant Poachers to Task

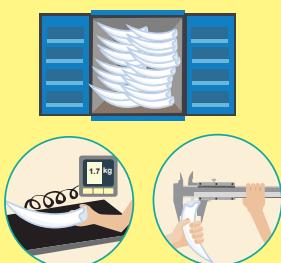
AVA's work did not end with the seizure of the ivory. To tackle the problem upstream, it is important to identify hotspots where poaching and illegal ivory trade originate. To do this, AVA collaborated with leading conservation biologist, Dr Samuel K Wasser, and his team from the University of Washington, as well as officers from the U.S. Homeland Security Investigations, to conduct DNA analysis of samples from this seizure.

Dr Wasser first developed a technology to extract DNA from faeces, which allowed him to map elephant genetics across Africa. Following that in 1998, he successfully extracted DNA from ivory, and could use it to compare against the genetic map he plotted earlier. He said in an interview with the New York Times in 2016 that these DNA tests are so accurate that he could "take a tusk from anywhere in Africa and trace its origins to within 300km of where that elephant was killed, often to the very park or reserve."

Dr Samuel Wasser's process of sampling ivory for DNA analysis

1

The tusks were first weighed and measured.



2

They were then grouped according to their characteristics.



3

Once sorted, specific ivory pieces were identified for sampling. A small piece of ivory was cut out from each sample.



4

Dr Wasser brought these samples back to his laboratory in the U.S. to conduct DNA analysis.



Scan to view
a video of the
ivory sampling
process



Such information has enabled conservationists to know where syndicates operate and, sometimes, to stop the crimes from happening. Back in 2005, he was also in Singapore to extract ivory samples for DNA testing. Those ivories were from a shipment that we had previously seized here in 2002. Using Dr Wasser's method, results showed that the ivory had come solely from elephants that lived in Zambia. That helped Zambian police focus on poachers and traders in the area, thereby facilitating their enforcement and preventive work.

Other cases of illegal imports

5 individuals prosecuted from January to May 2018

26 February 2018

Offence: Illegal import of rhinoceros horns and horn shavings

Sentence: 15 months' imprisonment

7 March 2018

Offence: Illegal import of hard corals

Sentence: 2 months' imprisonment

25 April 2018

Offence: Abetting the illegal import of 44 Fischer's Lovebirds; abetting animal cruelty and abetting the illegal import of 77 live birds without permit.

Sentence: 8 months' imprisonment

25 April 2018

Offence: Illegal import of 22 Indian Star Tortoises

Sentence: One-month imprisonment

23 May 2018

Offence: Illegal import of one sugar glider

Sentence: \$4,000 fine



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BIG CATS ARE UNDER THREAT, TOO

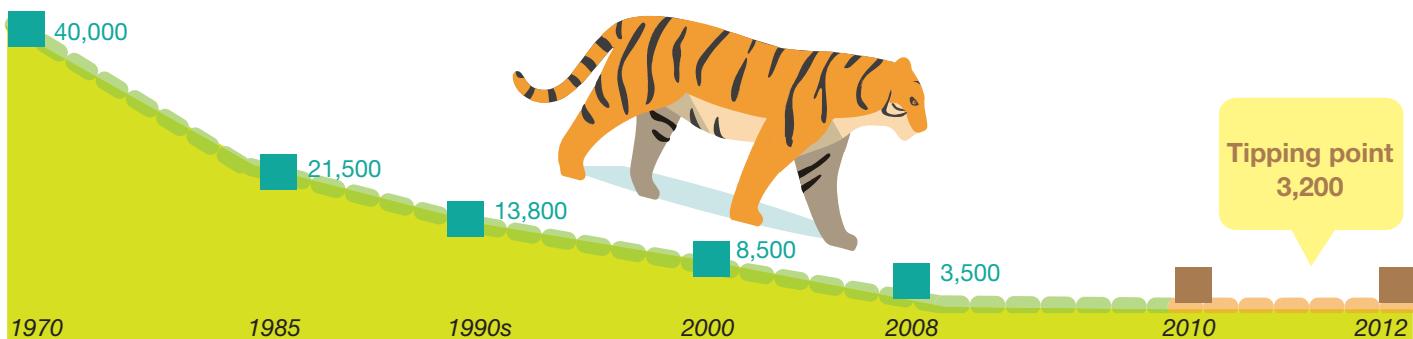
The annual World Wildlife Day is celebrated internationally on 3 March to raise awareness about the plight of wildlife across the world. In honour of this year's theme – "Big cats under threat" – we put the spotlight on the tiger, the majestic, largest, but also most endangered of the big cats' species.

Habitat destruction, habitat fragmentation, and poaching have caused the tiger population in the wild to dwindle to precariously low levels. Every part of the tiger – from teeth to bone to tail, is traded in illegal wildlife markets. It is estimated that fewer than 3,900 tigers roam the Earth now, less than 10% of the population in 1970.

Since 2015, there have been eight detections/seizures of illegal trade and smuggling of tiger parts in Singapore. The offenders were prosecuted under the law and the items confiscated.

What tiger parts are used for

	In Traditional Chinese Medicine
	Tail To cure skin diseases
	Skin To cure fever
	Bone As an anti-inflammatory for arthritis, rheumatism, etc.
	Claw Tiger claws & teeth as lucky charms As sedatives



In Singapore



Under Singapore's Endangered Species (Import & Export) (Prohibition of Sale) Notification, the domestic sale of tiger specimens is prohibited.

Anyone who sells, offers, or exposes for sale or display to the public any tiger parts and products commits an offence and shall be liable to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 for each species or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 1 year, or both.

Examples of enforcement cases in Singapore



2016

Illegal sale of 2 pieces of alleged tiger tooth
\$1,000 fine

2015

Possession of 1 piece of alleged leopard tooth
\$1,000 fine

2015

Possession and sale of 5 pieces of alleged tiger claws
\$5,000 fine

AVA'S ZERO-TOLERANCE STANCE

As a signatory to CITES (www.cites.org), Singapore takes a zero-tolerance stance on illegal sale or keeping of wildlife. We also do not condone the use of Singapore as a conduit to smuggle or engage in illegal trade of wildlife.

It is an offence to illegally import/export, possess, sell, offer/advertise for sale or display to public any illegal wildlife species (including their parts and derivatives) protected under CITES. Elephants are protected species under CITES and international trade in elephant ivory is prohibited.

CITES permits are required for any import, export and re-export of CITES-listed species. Offenders can be fined up to S\$50,000 per scheduled species (or a maximum aggregate of S\$500,000) and/or jailed up to 2 years, upon conviction. Being the national authority for implementing and enforcing the CITES agreement, AVA adopts a multi-pronged approach to combat illegal wildlife trade and possession.

AVA's Multi-Pronged Approach to Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade and Possession



Regular Monitoring

Retail outlets (e.g. pet shops, traditional medicine shops) and online sources are monitored for illegal sale of wildlife.



Routine & Surprise Checks

Such checks are conducted at the checkpoints, retail outlets, and residences to ensure no illegal trade/possession of wildlife.



Investigate Feedback & Information

We investigate feedback from the public as well as information from our monitoring system and collaboration with other agencies.



Generate Awareness

We distribute brochures and put up signs at checkpoints and retail shops. We also share cases with the public.

Demand for illegal wildlife and their parts fuels their trade. Do not be part of the demand. Around 52% of Earth's wildlife species have been driven to extinction in just four decades. Apart from habitat loss, poaching and illegal trade of wildlife play a major role in the extinction of species.

Members of the public with information on illegal wildlife trade can contact AVA at 6805 2992 or provide information through the online feedback form on AVA's website (www.ava.gov.sg/feedback). All information provided to AVA will be kept in strict confidence.

NEW APPOINTMENTS TO AVA BOARD

Four new members were appointed to the AVA Board with effect from 1 April 2018. Chairman of the Board Mr Lim Neo Chian was re-appointed, along with seven other Board members. All appointments are for a two-year term until 31 March 2020.

The four new members were:

- Dr Ho Kim Wai, Associate Professor, Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University
- Mr Jim Lim, Partner and Head of Department (Intellectual Property & Technology), KhattarWong LLP
- Ms Toh Hwee Tin, Director (Woman and Family Unit), National Trades Union Congress; Executive Secretary of the Food, Drink, and Allied Workers Union; and Executive Secretary of the Attractions, Resorts and Entertainment Union
- Mr Low Xin Wei, Director (Digital Workplace Programme Office); 2nd Director (HR Management Information and Systems); and Director (Strategic Planning and Research), Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office

In addition to Mr Lim, the seven re-appointed members were:

- Mr Lim Kok Thai, CEO, AVA
- Mr Eugene Wong, Founder and Managing Director, Sirius Venture Capital Pte Ltd
- Mr Dileep Nair, Independent Director, Keppel DC REIT Management Pte Ltd

- RADM (Dr) Tang Kong Choong, Chief of Medical Corps, Singapore Armed Forces
- Ms Chua Mui Hoong, Opinion Editor, The Straits Times, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd
- Mr Lau Teck Sien, Partner and Chief Investment Officer, HOPU Investment Co. Ltd
- Ms Harasha binte Khalid Bafana, Director, Adam & Hawa Network

Five Board members stepped down after their terms ended on 31 March 2018:

- Mr Peter Chia Leong Bin, CEO, Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory Ltd
- Mrs Lee Ai Ming, Senior Consultant, Dentons Rodyk & Davidson LLP
- Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, Assistant Director-General, National Trades Union Congress
- Mr Tan Kok Yam, Deputy Secretary (Smart Nation & Digital Government), Smart Nation & Digital Government Office
- Professor David Chan, Professor of Psychology and Director, Behavioural Sciences Institute, Singapore Management University

The Ministry of National Development (MND) and AVA welcome the new Board members and look forward to the continued support of the re-appointed Chairman and Board members. MND and AVA also extend its appreciation to all immediate past Board members for their invaluable service, guidance, and contributions during their tenure.

ASK JAMIE @ AVA LAUNCHED

The “Ask Jamie @ AVA” virtual assistant system is now available on AVA’s website (www.ava.gov.sg). Besides contacting AVA via the telephone and online feedback form, customers can also make use of “Ask Jamie @ AVA” to find the answers and resources they need.



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