More bite for laws against those who abuse animals

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PUTRAJAYA: Those who show cruelty to animals will face heavier punishments if an amendment to the Animal Act 1953 gets the nod of Parliament within the next few weeks.

The draft amendments to the Act are believed to include raising the fine for animal cruelty to RM50,000 and the jail term to not more than one year.

Deputy Agriculture and Agrobased Industry Minister Datuk Chua Tee Yong said the current laws were insufficient to protect animal welfare.

"Under the current Act, anyone guilty of an offence of cruelty to animals shall be liable to a fine of RM200 or imprisonment for a term of six months or both.

"We hope to table the proposed amendments in this Parliament sitting, which will suggest heavier fines and for repeat offenders to be penalised more severely," Chua told reporters after a press conference here to announce Universiti Putra Malaysia's Pesta Ang Pow 2012 yesterday.

Chua's statement was in response to a recent public outrage over photographs of a hawker who allegedly poured hot water on a stray dog.

The photographs began circulating and went viral on Facebook last week.

The hawker has admitted to committing the act on Feb 7, but claimed he did so on impulse to chase away persistent dogs which came to seek scraps.

The Veterinary Services Department (VSD) has since summoned the man for questioning.

"The department has taken the dog in its care, lodged a police report and applied for a court order to investigate the matter.

"The veterinarian who inspected the dog has reported that the animal is recovering from a 25cm-long wound on his body," Chua said, adding that initial investigations confirmed that the dog was scalded.

He also urged the public to consider adopting strays instead of buying pets from shops.

"One of the main causes of stray animals were by people who abandoned their pets.

"We are disappointed and appalled by people who abuse animals," Chua said.