

# Cat hotel operators plead guilty

**CRUELTY:** Duo to be sentenced on June 28

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**I**N a courtroom packed with animal lovers, two pet boarding centre operators pleaded guilty to 30 counts of cruelty to animals by not feeding and cleaning the cages of 30 cats left in their care.

The cats belonged to 10 pet owners who had "checked in" the felines at the Petknode Online Pet Store in Damansara Damai during the Hari Raya Aidilfitri break last year.

The operators, Shahrul Azuwan Adanan, from Batang Kali, and Yushairi Khairuddin, from Port Dickson, stood next to each other at the magistrate's court in Petaling Jaya here as the interpreter read the charges against them.

Yesterday was initially fixed for the first day of trial, but Shahrul and Yushairi changed their plea. They will be sentenced by magistrate K.B. Elena Hong Tze Lan on June 28. Shahrul and Yushairi, both 30, admitted to being negligent by not feeding the cats and cleaning their cages, resulting in suffering and pain. The offences were committed on Sept 3 and 4. They were charged under Section 44(1)(d) of the An-

imals Act, which carries a maximum fine of RM200, or up to six months' jail, or both.

It was revealed in court yesterday that eight of the cats died. Four belonged to an owner who left her cats at the centre from Aug 26 to Sept 4, where she reportedly paid nearly RM200 for the pet hotel services. When she went to the centre on Sept 4, her cats were dirty and smelly and eventually died.

In mitigation, counsel Syariful Nizam Shahrudin said his clients were truly sorry and that they, too, were traumatised. He said the duo had been careful and that was why most of their customers were regulars.

"They were short-handed during the Hari Raya holidays but did not have the heart to turn away their regular customers. It had nothing to do with greed."

He said when the pets were found at the Damansara Damai premises on Sept 4, none was dead.

"They were found dead several days later and the deaths were not caused by abuse."

Syariful said his clients were willing to pay RM200 for each of the 30 charges against them, which amounted to RM6,000 each.

Veterinary Services Department prosecuting officer Jamadi Badri said both the accused had put profits ahead of responsibility.

"They took in more than 100 cats during that time. They may not have physically abused the pets, but by not giving them food, the cats were abused emotionally and psychologically."



**Yushairi Khairuddin (red shirt) and Shahrul Azuwan Adanan at the magistrate's court in Petaling Jaya yesterday. The two pleaded guilty to 30 counts of cruelty to animals by not feeding and cleaning the cages of 30 cats left in their care. Pic by Syarafiq Abd Samad**