



Food for your pooch: Chua giving a packet of dog food to Alice Yong, 45, after opening the Malaysian National Animal Welfare Foundation 10th graduation ceremony at Central Park in Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya, yesterday. — Bernama

Public can view Animal Welfare Bill soon

PETALING JAYA: The much-anticipated Animal Welfare Bill to protect animals will soon go into a consultation phase before being released for public perusal.

Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Chua Tee Yong said the new legislation would encompass domestic pets as well as livestock and the treatment towards them.

"Because a lot of animal NGOs and industry players are in the forefront, we want to get them involved in our consultation sessions and get their input for a meeting ground that we can work on," he said, adding that the consultation session should be completed by the end of next month.

The Bill is in its drafting stage after it was first mooted last year.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Malaysian National Animal Welfare Foundation (MNAWF) 10th grad-

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uation ceremony of Canine Obedience Training here yesterday, Chua said the ministry was embarking on a three-pronged initiative to see to animal welfare.

Apart from the Bill, the Government is also amending the Animal Act and coming up with guidelines concerning pets.

In the proposed amendment to the Animal Act, those found guilty of abusing animals could face harsher penalties of a fine up to RM50,000 or a one-year jail term or both.

Currently, those convicted face only a maximum fine of RM200 or a jail term of not more than six months, or both.

"The Animal Act is currently very general and because it is so old, there are a lot of provisions missing.

"As times change, so do our lifestyles, the mechanism of the pet industry and how we treat animals," he said.

The guidelines, meanwhile, will act as a stop-gap measure while waiting for the two Bills to be tabled.

"The guidelines could include anything from dog training to pet hotels," he said.

Chua did not say when the guidelines were expected to be published but said they would not be legally binding.

He also said the Veterinary Services Department were taking initiatives to develop an accreditation system on pet shops and breeding centres.