

Giving animal act more bite

> Vet dept drafting new set of regulations which will focus on 10 key areas

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PUTRAJAYA: The Veterinary Services Department (DVS) is drafting a new set of regulations that will complement the amended Animal Welfare Act 2015 which is scheduled to be enforced early next year.

Its deputy director-general, Datuk Dr Quaza Nizamuddin Hassan Nizam, told *theSun* that there are 10 key areas that will be focused on, namely:

- ▶ licensing of animal activities;
- ▶ improvement of notices and compoundable offences;
- ▶ appointment of an animal welfare officer and voluntary animal welfare assistant;
- ▶ animals used in research, teaching and testing;
- ▶ accepted veterinary procedures;
- ▶ establishment of a training centre and training provider;
- ▶ managing rescued animals and rehabilitation of stray animals;
- ▶ transportation of animals;
- ▶ responsible animal ownership; and
- ▶ display, exhibiting and animal performance.

The draft for the first five areas, Quaza said, will be completed by year-end after holding a series of meetings with relevant

stakeholders and local councils.

Additionally, a questionnaire will also be uploaded for each section of the procedures on the DVS website soon that will allow the public to also participate by giving their feedback or recommendations.

Once the new draft of regulations are finalised and gazetted, with the agriculture and agro-based industry minister's approval, it will be widely used including by local councils.

"We want this to be the 'Peoples' Act' due to much attention on pet ownership and animal welfare in the last five years, I am glad the Act has finally materialised because this will ensure that pet owners have a greater responsibility towards their pets," he said, adding there will be penalties included.

However, he stressed that education and public awareness are more important than penalising an individual for abusing an animal as penalty alone would not help in the improvement of animal welfare in the long term.

He said the department is also mulling the need to make neutering or spaying mandatory due to increasing interest by some pro-animal groups who advocate for it to reduce the number of strays.

"However, we also must take into account the religious aspect, although it is allowed in the fatwa (religious teachings). But, this should come with the public's support, not through policymakers alone," he added.