

## **ANIMAL ABUSE IN MALAYSIA**

Nowadays, animal abuse is getting more and more prevalent in Malaysia. Recently there happened an incident where a dog was stabbed to death by the owner's neighbour. The attack occurred because he felt extremely annoyed when the dog barked at him as he passed by on his motorcycle. The man even threatened the dog owner after stabbing the poor dog using a machete. Eventually, the dog died before he arrived at the vet as it was suffering from a critical injury (Renushara, 2020). Another animal abuse case happened in Gombak, Malaysia, where a few neighbours repeatedly asking a man in his 30s to stop abusing two stray puppies. The neighbours lodged a police report as they couldn't stand to witness him beating the two poor puppies to death and later he kept the carcasses in a plastic bag (Wahab, 2019).

It is quite worrisome that these animal abuse cases persist in this modern world. The officials also had received 662 animal abuse cases in 2018 which indicates that there was about 30 percent increase in the total number of animal abuse cases as compared to 510 cases in 2017. Besides, there was around 10 percent increment in 2017 when only 463 cases were reported in 2016. The fact that the court had only received fines with an amount of RM15,000 in 2017 and increased to RM71,200 in 2018 were quite disappointing as this was just the total amount of fines collected by the authorities (NST Leader, 2020). This shows that the compounds and fines are not harsh enough to reduce animal abuse cases.

Animal abuse is known to be common among males and adults. There are several factors that lead to animal abuse. Firstly, animal abusers may have gone through family violence or childhood trauma that had failed to instill moral values in their life such as empathy, compassion, love, and care towards animals (Hughes, Antonaccio, & Botchkovar, 2020). According to Agnew (1998, pp. 193–200), he mentioned that animals who possessed attractive appearances, non-threatening, or fulfill a utilitarian function have lower chances and risk to experience abuse (Hughes et al., 2020). These animals are likely to be adored and taken well care of by people. Another theory

suggested by Agnew on why animals are abused is due to individual traits such as impulsivity, sensation seeking, and irritability towards animals (Hughes et al., 2020). For example, they may be feeling annoyed and irritated when a neighbour's dog barks and chases after them for no reason. They may also feel offended as neighbours would be misunderstood and perceive them as thieves trying to break into their house. Some may want to seek popularity and gain attention from social media so they decided to post a video of themselves abusing animals. People like this usually lack empathy, love, and self-control. They will never understand the sufferings and pain faced by these animals (Hughes et al., 2020). Lastly, these people also tend to neglect the consequences they will face from their abusive actions, such as punishment from the laws, societal views, and moral considerations (Hughes et al., 2020).

There are many types of animal abuse that occurred in Malaysia. They consist of simple neglect, organised abuse, gross neglect, animal hoarding. Simple neglect happens when animals are not given enough food, water, and proper shelter (Tochukwu, Oduah, & Nwankwo, 2013). One of the common scenarios of simple neglect is many pets are kept in a cage where they do not have adequate space to stand and move around. The second type of abuse is organised abuse (Tochukwu et al., 2013). It is usually indulged by villagers. Cockfighting is a blood sport where the cocks are trained to fight with another cock in the arena till death (SmartDory, 2020). The metal spur that is tied at its leg will act as a powerful weapon to defeat its opponent. Cockfighting is certainly against the law not only because it is considered animal abuse, it also involves money gambling, drug-taking, and gang violence (SmartDory, 2020). The third type of animal abuse is gross neglect. Gross neglect is known as a deliberate act carried out by pet owners where he/she purposely not fulfilling the essential needs and shelter for animals (Tochukwu et al., 2013). This usually happens when the heartless pet owners left their dogs outside under harsh weather.

The fourth type of animal abuse is animal hoarding. Animal hoarding usually occurs when a large group of animals is gathered together in a limited space, provided with a limited amount of food, hygiene, and veterinary care. One of

the common examples is when a large group of animals is transported from one farm to another farm in an inhumane way (Tochukwu et al., 2013). Moreover, hoarded animals also have to fight for survival such as food, water, space, and mate given with such poor living conditions (Cassiday, 2016).

One of the ways to stop the act of physical abuse towards animals is we have to recognise the issue (Sentient Media, 2018). Some of the pet owners tied up their dogs day and night so to make sure their dogs do not loiter around the neighbourhood biting people. They might think it is okay to do so but they did not realise it is considered animal abuse. People have to get themselves expose to more animal abuse-related articles, Youtube videos, documentaries or participate in SPCA Selangor to increase awareness of their actions (Sentient Media, 2018). Furthermore, people who happened to witness abuse against animals should immediately contact the police or officials so that they can take action and catch the perpetrators red-handed (Sentient Media, 2018).

Besides, the government had introduced a more stringent rule towards animal abuse, which is The Animal Welfare Act 2015 that came into effect in July 2017 (Azlee, 2018). A minimum fine of RM20,000 will now be charged towards animal abusers. Poor upkeep, improper, and inhumane management when keeping these animals will now be included in this new law (Azlee, 2018). Harsher punishments are definitely for the better as they may warn the public not to practice animal abuse.

Education also played an important role in minimising animal abuse cases in Malaysia. Schools should instill compassion, love, and care in children. Schools can organise volunteering programs to allow students to visit animal shelters and learn more about the devastating effects of animal abuse (Chiavarone, 2017). Peta Kids once quoted "Teaching kindness and respect for animals is the first step in teaching children empathy" (Chiavarone, 2017). Schools are encouraged to organise fundraising campaigns to allow students to practice kindness towards stray animals.

Moreover, parents played a part in reducing the number of animal abuse cases across Malaysia. Children learn by imitating their parents' behaviour (Chiavarone, 2017). It is important that as a parent they should avoid discussing negative ideas on animals (Chiavarone, 2017). Children might pick up negative perceptions of animals and this may affect children's compassion towards animals which is quite worsening. Research also found out that there is a deep connection between animal abuse, domestic and child abuse, and witnessing parental abuse. Usually, the first sign of a violent home can be observed when the elders started to show animal abusive behaviour (Johnson, 2018). So, parents must act as models to practice love and care towards their children and animals. Besides, parents have to expose their children to the importance of reporting animal abuse cases to officials (Azlee, 2018).

In conclusion, animal abuse is a crime that should be viewed with concerns from the public. We must stand together to fight for animal abuse that is still pertaining in Malaysia. Let us continue to spread love and care for animals and to minimise animal abuse cases across Malaysia.

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