



## **AVA explains euthanasia guidelines**

Issued on 22 October 2013

Recently, there has been news about a healthy, 7-month old rescued pet dog being euthanised by a veterinarian at the request of its adopter, due to aggression. There were also calls for the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) to look into the matter.

2 The AVA is the authority in Singapore regulating veterinarians, and works closely with the veterinary profession, through the Singapore Veterinary Association, on various veterinary professional matters, including the Code of Ethics for Veterinarians.

3 Veterinarians have a responsibility to consider not just the welfare of the pet / animal, but also the concerns and circumstances of the pet owner. Veterinarians will provide veterinary advice and administer the necessary treatment to pet / animal, and may at times be called upon to euthanize an animal for various reasons, such as to alleviate their suffering, or if they are aggressive. This is also the practice of the veterinary profession in the UK, US and Australia.

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4 All veterinarians are trained on the ethics and techniques of euthanasia using the most humane method that is internationally accepted. Before euthanizing an animal, the veterinarian will conduct the necessary professional assessment and satisfy himself that euthanasia is a reasonable option considering the circumstances. The veterinarian will ascertain ownership of the animal and discuss with the owner the various options available so that the owner can make the final informed decision. The decision, however, is ultimately the responsibility and right of pet owner. In advising the owner, the veterinarian, has to also be mindful of the implications of not acceding to a request for an aggressive pet to be euthanized, such as the client's potential distress and safety threats to the owner, his/her family, another unknowing adopter or the general public.

5 AVA has looked into the facts of the case in the media reports. The owner had considered alternatives such as re-homing her pet before deciding to have her dog euthanized. The vet clinic, The Animal Clinic, had followed protocol before putting down the animal, including discussing with the owner the alternatives. The clinic experienced first-hand the aggressiveness of the dog. Prior to the euthanasia of the dog on 7 Oct 2013, other vets in The Animal Clinic, who examined the dog also found its behaviour to be hostile, and in subsequent visits the degree of its aggressiveness escalated. On its last visit to the clinic on 7 Oct 2013, it could not be muzzled by clinic staff and needed sedation for procedures that required more handling.

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6 While the arrangement between the rescuer and the adopter is a private matter, AVA would like to stress that only dogs of suitable temperament and health should be re-homed. AVA urges calm by all parties concerned, and advises the dog rescuers to recognise the adopter's good intentions when adopting the dog in the first instance and to settle the matter amicably.

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