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SEARCH



## TOP STORIES



# Tied so tightly strays couldn't breathe

By Teh Jen Lee  
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THEY are lucky to be alive.

Two other stray dogs were not so lucky.

They died.

In fact, all seven dogs might have died of heat stress and possible strangulation in the pest-control company truck.

Luckily, one woman sounded the alert.

Housewife S K Tan was visiting her parents' flat at Petir Road when she saw the dogs.

They were at the back of the truck with metal wires tied tightly around the neck.

She alerted the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

One dog was tied up so tightly that its front paws could not touch the floor.

The SPCA rushed to the rescue but that dog still died.

Another dog was found already dead, hidden in a rice bag.

A spokesman for the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) said the driver, who worked for a pest-control company, has been fined \$1,000 for cruelty to animals.

But more importantly, the incident late last year prompted a set of new guidelines on handling strays.

The SPCA wrote to the National Environment Agency (NEA), which licenses pest-control companies. The letter was also sent to the AVA which is in charge of animal welfare.

SPCA executive officer Deirdre Moss said NEA was going to give a verbal warning but SPCA urged both agencies to do more.

The result: The SPCA-drafted guidelines on how pest-control companies should catch and transport strays.

These guidelines were officially adopted about three weeks ago. (See other report.)

Ms Moss said: 'It was a shocking revelation that there were no guidelines in place. How can pest-control companies have been licensed to catch dogs when there are no rules governing how they do it?

'That's why this really horrific thing happened.'

Mrs Tan, 34, recalled the horror of finding the dogs in the truck.

'It was a very hot Sunday morning. I heard the sound of dogs crying. The whining was very pitiful. I've had dogs before, they only make these sounds when they are in pain. My instincts told me something was not right,' she said.

She traced the cries to the back of a metal truck that was covered

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### **PANTING HEAVILY**

Through the padlocked grille door at the back, she could see the dogs tied up.

'They were tied very tightly and panting very heavily, trying to get air. They were very uncomfortable and so was I seeing them like that,' said Mrs Tan.

After checking that no-one was tending to the animals, she called SPCA.

Mrs Tan said: 'It's not right. Dogs are intelligent living beings, they don't deserve to be treated this way. People think stray dogs are dangerous, but that's because they don't understand them. Usually they are just defending themselves, they won't attack if not provoked.'

SPCA driver Kio Ng arrived at the scene around noon and immediately worked on getting the padlocked door open.

A policeman also showed up as a crowd began to gather.

Eventually the truck's driver turned up.

Mr Ng, 24, said: 'At first he acted like everything was normal.

'It was obvious that he didn't care for the dogs, otherwise he would not have left them like that. He also didn't care about people complaining about the dogs barking.'

The driver said the AVA centre for animal welfare and control was not open over the weekend so that's why he kept the dogs in the truck. But Mr Ng said it's no excuse.

He said this is the worst case of animal cruelty he has seen since he started work with SPCA last year.

The most pitiful was a dog hanging by its neck.

Mr Ng said: 'It was light brown in colour and tied very tightly. Its front legs couldn't touch the ground. Its body was stiff. The other dogs were shivering, it was very hard for them to breathe because they had been tied so tightly.'

In the middle of the truck was a cage with a cat - it was obviously traumatised by being surrounded by dogs.

But that was not all.

A rice bag was found at one corner of the truck with a dead dog inside.

Mr Ng shudders at the memory.

'The smell was horrible, the body was lying in a pool of blood. The driver didn't tell us about this dog until we went to SPCA. He wouldn't say how the dog died - who knows what happened to it,' he said.

Ms Moss told The New Paper that a post-mortem of the two dogs revealed that they probably died from heat stress.

Ms Moss said: 'From the way the dogs were tied up in the truck under the hot sun, there was obviously severe stress.

'It's no wonder that it resulted in extreme suffering and death of the two dogs.'

Three of the dogs that were rescued are now available for adoption.

Those interested should call the SPCA at 6287-5355 as soon as possible. For the other strays out there, Ms Moss wants stricter enforcement against animal cruelty by pest-control companies.

She said: 'How do we know this is not happening with other companies? We thank the lady for bringing to our attention the potential torture that strays go through.

'Here we are in a developed country, and yet the treatment of the strays in this case was absolutely barbaric.'

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