

News From SPCA Selangor

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To:

“Seeking Justice For Horses”



Shocked and angered by the statements made by **Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) Sabah Director Datuk Awang Sahak Salleh**, local animal welfare association **SPCA Selangor** is taking a **firm stand to seek justice for the atrociously neglected horses of Melingsung Ranch, Kota Kinabalu** – by pushing for the confiscation of all the horses and swift prosecution of the Ranch’s owner. **“Contrary to what Datuk Awang has said in the report in the New Straits Times yesterday - that the horses are in acceptable living conditions and “rumors and allegations” of neglect made by eyewitnesses are untrue and baseless, we have factual photographic evidence documented and collated by SPCA Selangor and the World Society For The Protection of Animals (WSPA),”** says **SPCA Chairperson Christine Chin.**

On the 1st March 2008, WSPA Member Society Manager Dawn Peacock visited the Melingsung Ranch with DVS Sabah officers who had been supervising the Ranch, and afterwards had a

meeting with **Datuk Awang Salleh** and the **Head Enforcement Dr Amat Kasim**. **“I told them that 80% of the horses I saw at the Ranch that day were in poor condition, most likely due to chronic malnutrition. Should this cruelty have been reported in KL, I am confident that the DVS there would have confiscated immediately and pushed ahead for prosecution. I read with disbelief the report in the NST yesterday – how could DVS Sabah possibly conclude that the horses are in a satisfactory condition, and let the ranch owner off the hook when all evidence shows the contrary?”** said Peacock. **“The Government’s job is to enforce the Law guiding such use of animals and ensuring the animals wellbeing. In this case the enforcement role has failed – the horses are paying the price for this failing with their lives and continued suffering,”** she continued.

The **heart-wrenching situation** at Melingsung Ranch was originally **reported by tourists in June 2007**, who had signed up for **horse-back riding whilst holidaying in Sabah**, yet were **sickened by what they saw**. All horses were **grossly underweight**, one horse was reportedly seen **lying dead on the beach**, and most of them were **suffering from skin diseases, open wounds and malnutrition**. The owner of the ranch received a warning from **Sabah DVS**, yet continued his **mistreatment of the horses resulting in rapid deterioration of already malnourished horses in December 2007**, when the **SPCA Selangor received another complaint with photographic evidence**. The organisation flew an official to Melingsung Ranch in **January 2008**, who **confirmed the eyewitness accounts of the neglected horses** and reported that the horses were in a **worse state than before**, with many of them having **died due to their condition**. Many of these horses had been **professional endurance horses, imported from Australia**, and it is sad to compare their current condition to that of their prime. Their condition has **brought international outrage in the equine world**, with **protests lodged as far apart as England, the United States, Australia, South Africa and all over Malaysia itself**.

“Any persons who could look at these horses and state ‘good condition’ at any point in the last 6 months must be inept,” comments **SPCA Selangor Equine Welfare President Quek Sue Yian**. **“We have a Vet Report from Dr. Balakrishna Polanaidoo SMZ, AMT. B.V.Sc. & A.H., Cert V. Ophthal & Eq. Surg. (Syd) Veterinary Surgeon on the matter on 28th February 2008 stating that ‘It is in my opinion that these horses need desperate care and treatment as soon as possible.’”**

With support from international bodies, such as **WSPA, PETA (People For The Ethical Treatment Of Animals), WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and the FEI (Federation Equestre International)**, **SPCA Selangor have repeatedly made offers to help to rescue and rehabilitate the horses with the cooperation of DVS Sabah**, on condition that they would be **confiscated and prosecution would be actively pursued by the DVS**. However, the **DVS Sabah has been reluctant to do this at every step**.

“We have waited for too long for the authorities to take action against the owner. Within the next few days, following advice from our team of legal advisors, representatives from SPCA Selangor will be going to Sabah to lodge a police report against the owner of the Ranch,” says Quek.

The **WSPA and the SPCA Selangor will continue to call for justice for the remaining horses through confiscation and prosecution of the owner**. Both organisations will

embark on an active campaign to ask tourists to think twice before going to Sabah for holidays (with a focus on Australia and New Zealand), and will lobby the FEI and the Equestrian Association of Malaysia (EAM) to avoid using Sabah as an Equine event destination with immediate effect.

“In the time taken for action, and the international coverage it has gained, this case sends a chilling picture to the world animal welfare in Malaysia. Successful confiscation of the animals and prosecution of the negligent owner will be an achievement for animal welfare, and humanity,” comments Chin.

“As far as we are concerned, this case is far from closed.”

**Updates on the ongoing case are available at the SPCA
Selangor website at www.sPCA.org.my**

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Note to Editors:

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