

## **An open letter concerning Thailand's Ongoing Campaign to Elevate Animal Welfare**

To All animal welfare organisations,

The Department of Livestock Development (DLD), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, is deeply concerned by certain news reports featuring pictures and video clips of alleged animal torture in Thailand over the past few months.

On behalf of DLD, the main government agency responsible for preventing animal torture as well as promoting animal welfare, I wish to reiterate that Thailand does not tolerate any form of animal abuse. Our department has continuously worked with all stakeholders, including public agencies, industries, civil society and animal welfare organisations, to promote greater awareness on animal abuse and adopt proactive measures to address this issue.

### Existing Legal Frameworks

Since 2014, Thailand has promulgated the Cruelty Prevention and Welfare of Animals Act, B.E. 2557 (2014) to protect animals of all species from abuse, to elevate animal welfare, and prosecute offenders. The Act proscribes any act of cruelty to all animal species without justification and has clearly defined penalties. Violations of the Act are punishable by up to two years in prison or a fine of up to 40,000 baht (approx. USD 1,300), or both. In addition, the mistreatment of animals can be reported via many channels. This includes filing complaints directly to the Division of Animal Welfare and Veterinary Service of the DLD, the local DLD offices, the local police, as well as via the mobile application "DLD 4.0."

The Division of Animal Welfare and Veterinary Service and the local DLD offices have the duty of investigating such complaints to verify the facts.

### Protection of Elephants

1) The DLD has established the Division of Animal Welfare and Veterinary Service, following the promulgation of the Cruelty Prevention and Welfare of Animals Act, B.E. 2557 (2014). All DLD local offices are authorised to prosecute offenders and rescue maltreated animals. Offenses include allowing elephants to roam free in the city, circus showing of elephants that torture elephants in the training process, using elephants for excessive labour, and forcing elephants to engage in activities that are deemed inappropriate to their nature. Our goal is to ensure that elephant owners make appropriate provisions according to international standards under the five freedoms of animal welfare.<sup>1</sup>

2) We have established elephant hospitals under the National Institute on Elephant Research and Health Service, for treatment and healthcare of domesticated elephants with free of charge. In addition, we have cooperated with the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards in drawing up guidelines for elephant welfare management in elephant camps. The aims of this guideline are to ensure the elephant health and welfare, the safety of personnel working in elephant camps, as well

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom from hunger and thirst / discomfort / pain, injury, or disease / fear and distress / freedom to express normal behaviour.

as visiting tourists. In this regard, the DLD wishes to thank the animal welfare organisations for their assistance to elevate elephant welfare.

Assistance to Elephants during the COVID-19 Pandemic

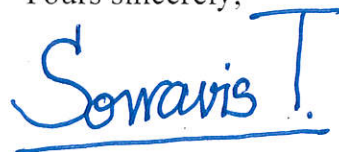
The COVID-19 pandemic has gravely impacted on Thailand's tourism sector and caused a detrimental shortage of elephant feed across the country. The DLD responded by mobilising feed products and agricultural products from across the country as alternative sources of feed for the elephants. As a result, since the COVID-19 had been reported in Thailand, DLD has distributed over 18 tons of fresh grass and 29 tons of hay to elephant camps nationwide. In case of temporarily relocation of the elephants to other locations with adequate feed supplies, DLD receives a great support from the elephant foundations, animal welfare organisations, and other elephant camps. For example, some elephants in Phuket were relocated to Phangnga Province, where food was more plentiful.

Allegations on the Abuse of Monkeys for the Coconut Industry

With regard to DLD's preliminary investigations on the abuse of monkeys in the coconut industry, we found that only small scale households use monkeys to harvest coconuts, as per the local, traditional way of life. These monkeys are treated as members of the family. The coconut industry itself has publicly stated that it does not condone the use of monkey labour in the manufacturing of its products, and that monkey labour is insufficient to meet the demands of the large scale coconut industry. Moreover, they have entered into agreements with foreign retailers, importers and coconut farmers in Thailand to guarantee that there is no monkeys involved in the supply chain, and it can be checked via a product tracing system. In addition, coconut companies have deployed investigative teams to conduct random inspections on coconut farms.

The allegations made by some animal welfare organisations are ambiguous and have caused adverse impacts on our small scale farmers. We hope that such organisations will demonstrate accountability and responsibility by providing us with facts of their cases or any information, so that we may respond in accordance with the law, and stop the suffering of those monkeys, if the accusations are proven to be true. To this end, the DLD strongly stands ready to continuing our constructive cooperation with all stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Soravis T." with a horizontal line underneath the name.

(Dr.Soravis Thaneto)  
Director General