



I don't wanna be a pork chop.



Please don't kill me, I'm a cute little piggy.

## SOS (save our souls) plea for Sumo and Peggy

# Lamma drama over two pet pigs



Over here, my dears, and let me cuddle you...

TO the government they are simply an **eyesore** and a **menace** to society. But to some inhabitants of Lamma Island, especially their 'mother' Keren Goldman, her two Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs, Sumo and Peggy, are **adorable** pets. The Agriculture and Fisheries Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) don't see it that way. For starters, they simply banned the pigs from **roaming** freely on the island. So with nowhere else to go, the pair of porkers took up residence in Keren's home, writes **Doris Wu**.

**P**ET lover Keren has been forced to keep Sumo and Peggy under her roof for several years now, ever since a **bylaw** was passed forbidding pigs to be kept as normal swine on Lamma Island. At one time, there were **numerous** small pig farms on the island and even a tannery, but all of these have now closed.

Involvement in an 18-month battle to **legalise** the pigs' right to life on the island, Keren even tried to obtain an 'exhibition' licence. In doing so, she went through every relevant government channel trying to get an exemption – literally a stay of execution – for her beloved pets... but to no avail.

Before the AFCD got on to Keren's case, she had already sacrificed a **great deal** on behalf of her lovely pigs. She gave up her house, moved to another location and built a new shelter to accommodate the animals.

Previously, the standard of facilities she constructed and the equipment Keren provided and maintained had been approved and passed by the AFCD. A licence from the EPD concerning waste disposal was being processed and seemed **imminent**.

### Turnaround

Suddenly, the whole thing took a U-turn and the bureaucratic process ground to a halt. Keren was informed three months ago by the AFCD that her licence had been rejected because the golden scrap of paper

they were about to issue did not cover such premises on government land.

To make matters worse, the EPD, **metaphorically** speaking, read her the Riot Act. They contacted Keren about a month ago informing her that because she did not hold a valid permit, she would be prosecuted unless the pigs were surrendered to the AFCD.

### Pen-pushers

Keren had always thought (mistakenly as it turned out) that her two pets were a "special case". She believed the AFCD and EPD would show sympathy, especially knowing Sumo and Peggy posed little or no danger to the community. Indeed the pair had never violated any health decree or, at the time, any known bylaws.

To her surprise – but to no one else's – the government **bureaucrats** were unmoved by her *crie de la coeur*. Keren had expected more understanding, especially at local level, about her plight. She was even confident that they would make an exception to the rule. Once again, heartless pen-pushers won the day.

Sumo and Peggy have been inseparable ever since they became pals a few years ago. Keren admits that her pets have grown into quite large animals. Indeed, they are nothing like the usual picture of a pair of cuddly pet-sized pot-bellied porkers. But she describes them as "loving characters with unique charms."

Anyone who gets to know S&P will fall in love with them, said Keren. Children often visit the pigs at her secret "farm". The pigs have gained celebrity status on Lamma and are well liked by those who get to see them. More to the point, Sumo and Peggy are both healthy. Like any normal pet, each has been de-wormed and tagged with a microchip. And to the casual eye, they pose no danger to life, limb or health... nor are they a nuisance.

However, the AFCD and EPD disagree; in fact they have nothing good to say about the pigs at all. They insist that they must seize and destroy Sumo and Peggy, which they brand as **illegal** livestock, much as they did with the island's chickens during the SARS outbreak.

The government says the pets will either be sold at an auction or sent to a slaughterhouse. Keren has no clue when the AFCD will strike to take her "babies" away and, naturally is becoming more **distraught** by the day.

For now, the pigs have been moved to a "safe house" where those in they know believe the AFCD staff (known locally as 'The Gestapo') can't find them.

### Matter of time

But even after scouring the island for two months to find her pigs a new home, Keren is still worried. She knows that it's only a matter of time before the pair are tracked down and snatched away with a noose around their fat necks.

She has also tried every possible means to find them another home somewhere in Hong Kong. Keren has talked to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and other agencies, but to no avail.

Even at this 11th hour, Keren is still urging the public to muster any publicity they can in her battle to save these two innocent pigs. She would welcome any information as to where she might re-locate Sumo and Peggy. If you know of a soft spot where a couple of pot bellied pals might lay down their heads in comfort and safety, give Keren a call at 9010 7970.

### ES Plus Piggy profiles

**Sumo**  
A male, six-year-old Vietnamese pot-bellied pig (Vpbb). He weighs in at a healthy 136kg. Keren rescued him five years ago after he was abandoned on Lamma Island. Surprisingly, he was overweight and had to go on a diet to ease the pressure on his legs.

**Peggy**  
A four-year-old female Vpbb, slightly lighter than Sumo and weighing in at a trim 91kg. Until Keren found her, she had been kept in a normal flat for her entire life and could barely walk. Her previous owner had been advised by a *fung shui* master to befriend a pig, but as she grew in size the family decided to abandon her.

**Food for thought**  
Keren has nourished her pigs on organic feedstuffs ever since she adopted them. Occasionally, they are given dry dog food as a treat. Although Keren is always kind-hearted, she is strict when it comes to maintaining their weight. This she closely monitors since even an overweight pig is in danger of suffering heart or other health problems!

### A vet's opinion

**Dr John Wedderburn**, of Lamma Animal Welfare Centre, says: "The Government is determined to kill Keren's pigs and they will probably get their way, since people involved in the case appear heartless. Unfortunately, the law gives them its full weight to carry out their extermination."

"We don't know the day when Sumo and Peggy will be taken away, auctioned off then slaughtered... but it will be soon unless something is done."

Bye bye Lamma!

Sigh... why am I a pig?



### Glossary

- |                        |                               |                                   |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. eyesore (n. 眼中釘)    | 6. numerous (adj. 數目眾多的)      | 11. bureaucrat (n. 官僚作風的人)        |
| 2. menace (n. 威脅)      | 7. legalise (v. 法律上認為正當)      | 12. crie de la coeur (phr. 激烈的抗議) |
| 3. adorable (adj. 可愛的) | 8. great deal (phr. 大量的)      | 13. illegal (adj. 違法的)            |
| 4. roam (v. 漫遊)        | 9. imminent (adj. 即將來臨的)      | 14. distraught (adj. 心痛的)         |
| 5. bylaw (n. 地方法規)     | 10. metaphorically (adv. 比喻地) |                                   |

\*Big word(s) and Amazing phrase(s) are published on page 19.