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Our mission is to improve the quality of life for stray dogs through rescue, rehabilitation, and rehoming; and to increase public awareness and acceptance of stray dogs as companion animals who deserve to be treated with compassion and kindness.



TICK OUTBREAK AT THE ANIMAL LODGE: OUR WORST CRISIS YET

For the first time in seven years of operating at The Animal Lodge, we are facing the most severe tick outbreak we've ever experienced. What started as a worrying rise in tick sightings has now escalated into a full-blown crisis, which is putting our dogs' health, safety and lives at risk.

As reported by The Straits Times, shelters across the Tengah facility—which houses more than 40 animal welfare groups, breeders, and businesses—have been hit by an unprecedented surge in ticks.

Ticks have been found crawling not only on dogs, but also on volunteers' clothing and skin after routine walks. Photographs published in the news showed clusters of ticks on breeder doors, a glimpse of how serious the infestation must be inside.

What is Happening at The Animal Lodge

Despite more than 40 pesticide treatments conducted by NParks' Animal & Veterinary Service (AVS) since March, the outbreak remains uncontrolled. Cleaning and tick spraying are done weekly in common areas and fortnightly in dog runs, yet ticks continue to multiply.

The Root Problem

The reality is, spraying pesticides alone cannot solve this. The root cause lies in the fact that not all dogs at the facility are on tick preventives.

- Breeders in particular often avoid preventives, as some medications may harm pregnant dogs and cause birth defects in puppies—which is their income source.
- This creates a vicious cycle: preventives only work if every dog is protected. When ticks bite a treated dog, they die. But if ticks feed on untreated dogs, they survive and multiply.

Ticks outside the facility are also thriving. Pesticides are ONLY applied inside the facility but not at immediate surrounding roads, where the dogs walk out to daily.

How's It's Affecting Our Dogs

Since 23 July, the effects have been devastating. Nearly one-third of the dogs in our kennel have fallen sick. Despite our best efforts, the situation is overwhelming.

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CONTINUED: TICK OUTBREAK AT THE ANIMAL LODGE

DESPITE MONTHS OF PESTICIDE SPRAYING, THE TICK OUTBREAK AT THE ANIMAL LODGE CONTINUES—DRIVEN BY A LACK OF PREVENTIVE CARE ACROSS THE FACILITY

At MercyLight, we are doing all we can:

- Every dog is on monthly preventives like Nexgard and Heartgard.
- We apply geranium oil and apple cider vinegar multiple times a day to repel ticks.
- Volunteers remain vigilant and keep a lookout for ticks - but with almost 70 dogs, it's impossible to monitor every dog's temperature round the clock.

The challenge is compounded by the nature of tick fever:

- Symptoms may not appear for up to 3 weeks or may be so subtle they go unnoticed - some dogs test positive without showing fever at all.
- By the time signs emerge, such as loss of appetite or lethargy, the disease can already be severe and potentially fatal as it causes the blood count to drop dangerously low.
- Treatment involves 28 days of oral medication, repeated blood tests, and intensive veterinary care, all of which are extremely costly.



TICKS DON'T STOP AT GATES - neither should prevention. When even one dog is left unprotected, the entire shelter community suffers.

Another heartbreaking challenge is with dogs that are fearful of vets.

Bringing them in repeatedly for testing and treatment risks traumatizing them further, putting us in a painful dilemma. 🐾

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Donate: Medical care, blood tests and medication are draining our funds rapidly. Your support helps us continue treatment.

Volunteer: More hands are needed to help us care for sick dogs and keep kennels clean.

Stay Vigilant: For adopters and fosterers - ensure your dogs are on monthly preventives and watch closely for early signs of tick fever.

Write to your MP: Animal welfare policies in Singapore can be influenced by community voices. Concerned citizens—adopters, volunteers or residents near The Animal Lodge can write to their Member of Parliament (MP) to:

- Express concern about the tick outbreak at The Animal Lodge
- Advocate for stricter enforcement of preventive care for all dogs on-site, including breeders
- Request long-term improvements to sanitation and biosecurity protocols at The Animal Lodge under NParks
- You can find your MP and contact details at www.parliament.gov.sg/mps
- A respectful, heartfelt email can make a real difference.



TICKS DON'T WAIT, NEITHER DO WE - Amid a rising outbreak, our volunteers spray preventives on our dogs before every walk and conduct physical inspections daily.

MEET THE ADOPTERS: UNO, HACHIKO, KIKO & EBI

FINDING FOREVER HOMES: THE JOURNEY OF 3 TOY POODLES & 1 MINIATURE PINSCHER CONFISCATED BY NPARKS FROM ILLEGAL BREEDERS & SMUGGLERS

Earlier this year, three toy poodles and one Miniature Pinscher were confiscated by NParks after being traced to illegal breeders or smuggling attempts across Singapore's borders. Before being placed for adoption, the dogs underwent a mandatory quarantine period to ensure they were free from infectious diseases. Once cleared, MercyLight, as an official NParks partner, released their profiles for adoption, resulting in an overwhelming response.

Within two days, MercyLight received over 200 applications for the four dogs. While heartening, the overwhelming demand for these "branded" dogs reinforces the notion of a strong preference for purebred dogs over Singapore Specials.

MercyLight upholds the adoption process to a stringent standard, first through an initial screening stage. Each applicant is carefully screened to ensure a genuine, responsible and permanent commitment to the dog. Many applications had to be rejected for reasons like:

- "For the kids": Dogs are not toys for children; they are lifelong family members requiring care and stability.
- Guard dog requests: Expecting a Toy Poodle or Miniature Pinscher to "guard" a home is unrealistic and shows a lack of understanding of the breeds.
- Breeding intentions: Some applicants openly admitted plans to breed the dogs. This is illegal, unethical and cruel. Breeding not only exploits the dogs but also perpetuates the cycle of abuse and abandonment that NParks and its partners are working hard to break.

After the initial screening, shortlisted applicants will be invited to meet the dogs and attend interviews. For suitable candidates, a home visit is conducted next to ensure the environment is safe and appropriate. Only then is the adoption finalized. This stringent process ensures every adoption is for life, not just a fleeting decision.

Eventually, four carefully chosen families were matched with the dogs. These outcomes reflect the commitment to ensuring every dog is placed in a safe, loving and experienced home.

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FINDING HOME IN EACH OTHER - Uno with Siew and Edmund, together with MercyLight alumnus Lael.



A FAMILY TWICE BLESSED - Hachiko with Candis and Gene with Helios. Both adopted. Hachiko now enjoying her new life with Helios.



LITTLE DOG, BIG HEARTS - Kiko with Jayce and family, whose experience with Miniature Pinschers and affection shine through.

CONTINUED: MEET THE ADOPTERS

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PREPARING THE HEART AND HOME

Potential adopters sometimes feel overwhelmed by the questions we ask. These aren't meant to discourage, they are essential in making sure that adoption is for life.

Every dog that reaches adoption has often been supported by a village of volunteers and rescuers who saved them, fosterers who hand-fed and rehabilitated them, trainers who taught them to trust again and caregivers who stayed up through the night nursing them back to health. These people carry deep hopes that the dog finds not just a home, but the right home.

Before adopting, families should honestly ask themselves:

Why do we want a dog?

Is it a well-thought-out decision, or driven by impulse or pressure?

Who handles the day-to-day care?

Walks, feeding, baths, vet visits - unclear roles often lead to neglect.

Are we financially ready?

Ongoing costs include food, vaccinations, grooming, training and emergencies.

Are we prepared for behaviour or medical issues?

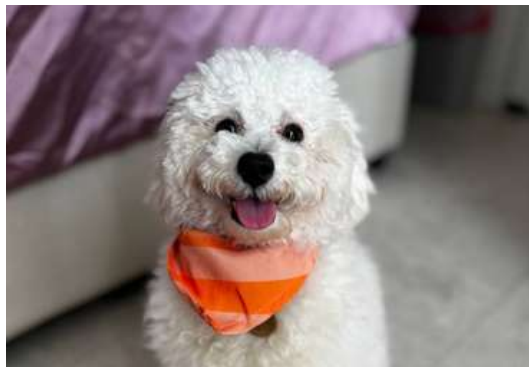
Dogs may have anxiety, trauma or special needs that require time and care.

Is everyone in the household committed?

One person may love the idea of a dog, but without honest pre-conversations, unspoken assumptions often lead to conflict, frustration or surrender. The whole family is welcoming a new family member for life - all family members should meet and spend time with the animal to get comfortable together.

Every dog at MercyLight has a story, whether happy living outside minding their own business, looked after, cared for by workers or its kampong, rescued from the streets, given up by owners or smuggled. Adopters don't just adopt, they are guardians through the joyful, challenging and meaningful moments of the animal's life.

By having the difficult conversations early, you help to make a lasting difference in the lives of a Blessing.



IN SAFE, LOVING HANDS - Ebi with her new veterinarian family, where expert care meets gentle, unconditional love.



Rear seat compartment showing the cramped compartment the animals were hidden in (Credit: ICA)

SMUGGLING FOR PROFIT - An example from a real ICA case from June 2024. Parvovirus is common, a tragic outcome enabled by breeders, smugglers and the buyers who fuel the demand.

MEET THE ADOPTERS: OREO



DOUBLE THE FLUFF, DOUBLE THE JOY - Oreo (right) has found her forever home with Sherlyn and Alfred, shown alongside her sweet sibling Mochi.

Beyond the four adoptions, MercyLight also rehomed a Miniature Pomeranian. Originally purchased as a birthday gift for a young niece, the dog was surrendered within a month when the family realised they could not manage the responsibility. 🐾

NEW RESCUE: NOVA

NO WAY BACK, NO WAY FORWARD, UNTIL WE STEPPED IN FOR NOVA

Nova was found at Changi Jetty Road and rescued by NParks while she was still unsterilised and in heat. On her intake record, a note read: "cannot be returned to its original location after sterilisation."

To us, this was a red flag. In situations like this, dogs that are not redeemed may face only two outcomes:

- Euthanasia
- Relocation

Relocation often means being sent to remote, forested areas where survival is very slim due to the lack of food sources or the high risk of being attacked by other packs of dogs (who often see lone dogs as a threat). Either option would have been a death sentence for Nova.

Knowing this, we stepped in to redeem Nova. Now safe with us, she is adjusting to her new environment, with the hope that one day she will find a forever home where she never has to face such uncertainty again. 🐾



MARKED FOR A QUIET EXIT - Nova was rescued from a fate of death. Now safe, she's adjusting to life with hope and the promise of a forever home.

NEW RESCUE: POPPY & DANTE

POPPY AND DANTE'S REDEMPTION JOURNEY AFTER TWO YEARS IN LIMBO

Like Nova, Poppy and Dante were also rescued from Changi Jetty Road and listed by NParks for redemption. We initially believed they might be Nova's companions and hoped it would help them assimilate more easily. But their history turned out to be very different.

- Both were caught two years ago by NParks and they had been housed at the Center for Animal Rehabilitation ever since.
- Despite efforts, their progress in becoming adoptable had stalled. Poppy couldn't be showered for over two years while Dante would bark at strangers. Both also suffer from multiple allergies.

In a first-of-its-kind decision, NParks put them up for redemption by Animal Welfare Groups like MercyLight, hoping a new environment and network might give them a real shot at adoption.

When they arrived, we discovered another challenge: both tested heartworm positive. They had not been on preventives. Poppy's case was severe, marked by worrying nosebleeds - a sign of advanced heartworm disease.

Heartworm treatment is long (4-6 months), costly and delicate. Dogs must remain calm and stress-free throughout, as over-excitement or stress can cause the parasitic worms to die and dislodge, clogging arteries and vessels. This may eventually lead to inflammation and sepsis, a painful and often fatal complication.

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UNDERNEATH THE BARK - Dante's gentle soul is now beginning to emerge. With allergies, trauma, and heartworm behind him, he's one step closer to hope.

CONTINUED: NEW RESCUES POPPY & DANTE

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Physical activity makes the heart pump faster and harder - with worms already clogging the heart and blood vessels, this extra workload can lead to heart failure. That's why heartworm-positive dogs are often prescribed strict rest and very limited activity, to keep their heart rate low and avoid sudden strain while their body gradually clears the infection.

Adoption will have to wait until they are nursed back to health. Still, there is good news:

- Both Poppy and Dante were already accustomed to walking on leash due to NParks' rehab efforts, making integration into the shelter smoother.
- They have begun to settle in with the pack, eating well and even starting to play - a small but important sign of trust and recovery. 🐾



ONCE UNTOUCHABLE - Poppy was unbathed, allergic and nearly forgotten. Now she's begun heartworm treatment and is learning to trust again.

ONE BITE. A LIFETIME OF CONSEQUENCES.

The heartworm lifecycle begins with a single infected mosquito bite and can end in heart and lung failure without prevention. Monthly protection saves lives.



TRANSMISSION

A mosquito bites an infected dog and ingests microfilariae, the first-stage larvae of the heartworm parasite (*Dirofilaria immitis*), along with the dog's blood.



DEVELOPMENT

Inside the mosquito, the microfilariae develop into their infective larval stage over a period of 10-14 days, depending on environmental conditions.



INFECTION

When the same mosquito bites another dog, it deposits the infective larvae onto the dog's skin, where they enter the body through the bite wound.



TAKE OVER

Without monthly heartworm prevention, the larvae reach the heart and lungs, where they mature into adult worms, causing organ damage, inflammation, and eventual failure.

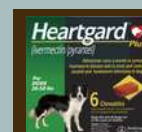
PREVENTION IS PROTECTION FOR EVERYONE.

Vaccines shield dogs from deadly diseases like Parvovirus, Distemper and Leptospirosis while keeping shelter mates, fosters and families safe too.

Every donation helps Mercylight provide vital health protection for our rescues, from vaccinations to parasite prevention and annual blood work. Long-term care doesn't stop at adoption. Future families should be ready to continue this commitment:

- NexGard (ticks & fleas): \$120-140/year
- Heartgard (heartworm): \$70-100/year
- Core vaccinations: \$55-100/year
- Annual blood tests: \$200-400/year

🐾 These aren't optional. They're the foundation of a healthy, happy life - for your dog, your family and the community. 🐾



SPECIAL FEATURE: GIVING EASTER A SAFE SPACE

THE STORY OF HOW SU FERN AND HENG TIONG OPENED THEIR HOMES UP TO EASTER, A SPECIAL NEEDS DOG WITH SUDDEN ACQUIRED RETINAL DEGENERATION SYNDROME

Could you share more about your history with Easter before you decided to bring him home?

Dogs in the "Easter kennel" were some of the first few we bonded with at MercyLight. Back when Calvary was just diagnosed with cancer, a few of us volunteers decided to bring her whole pack out, and that's when we really got to know the personalities of the dogs in the pack, including Easter. I saw that Easter was smart, calm and surprisingly well-behaved outside. He walked very well and once he got to know you, he opened up a lot. From 2020 onwards, whenever we could, we would bring them out.

What made you decide it was the right time to open your home to Easter? Did you have any doubts?

We always wanted to have a dog in the house, it was always part of the plan, but we weren't decided on which dog exactly. There were also few different factors that aligned at the same time. It just so happened that the house was ready, and then the circumstances in the Easter pack, with what happened to Scooby and Calvary, and Easter's Sudden Acquired Retinal Degeneration Syndrome.

We also knew that Easter was not doing so well at the shelter, the puppies were annoying him, and he had some skin issues as well. We thought that this new neighbourhood would be good for a dog, as there was quite a lot of greenery around. It felt like the right time and we decided that we could do something to help.

How did you adjust your home to Easter's needs?

Honestly, not much. The house was empty when we moved in, and we intentionally kept it minimal. Most of the furniture don't have sharp corners. One thing we do intentionally, is to be consistent in where things are placed. No bags on the floor, nothing sharp lying around, and his bed stays in the same spot. At first, he struggled to find his water bowl, so we had the idea to put the fan next to it, so now he knows the water bowl is by the fan. We also make sure doors are closed (kitchen, toilet), so he doesn't wander into unsafe spots.

How was your first week with Easter? What were the main challenges?

There weren't too many challenges, he adjusted quite well. From the first night, Easter already found his spot on the couch. The only thing was the walks. In the beginning, Easter was very scared. There is a track that goes around our estate, but he couldn't even finish one loop of the track. Sometimes he would panic and want to go home, especially near loud areas or the expressway and if there were kids running about. He's very smart though, even though he is blind, he mapped out the way back to the house. Over time, we learned to be patient, and slowly expose him to the environment so it becomes more familiar to him. Now, he is a lot more confident within the estate.



BEYOND SIGHT AND FULL OF JOY - Through patience and quiet understanding, Su Fern and Heng Tiong gave Easter not just a home but a second chance.

How has Easter settled into his new routine? Have there been any changes? Were there any surprises?

He settled into the house very quickly. He has human friends but no dog friends. He hardly barks; in fact, one neighbour didn't know we had a dog because he is so quiet. He is also surprisingly good with babies and toddlers. The first time Heng Tiong's niece came, he was so curious and even tried to climb into the pram. If a baby cries, he would get curious and try to look for the baby. With toddlers, he was also very good. One of our friend's kids came over, and although he was curious, he understood that the toddler was scared and just sat quietly nearby.

One thing that changed was the condition of his coat. The first month he was here, his coat was in bad shape. He scratched a lot, shedded like crazy, and we had to vacuum constantly. It took one to two months before it improved. Now he is much furrier and sheds a lot less.

Any special outings or adventures?

Not yet, we are taking it slow. It took over a month just for him to walk confidently around the estate. Now, he can go a bit further, out the main gate, along the park connector, but he usually wants to turn back after a few minutes. We have plans to bring him to West Coast Park once the dog run reopens.

Any words of advice for adopting a dog with special needs?

Patience. We were lucky because we already knew Easter's personality, but even then it takes effort and empathy to see things from his perspective. A blind dog reacts in ways you don't expect. It is counter-intuitive, but we have to imagine how overwhelming new places and sounds are for him.

Just because a dog has special needs doesn't discount the love they can give. Easter has just as much to give as any other dog. He still greets us every morning and when we come home, still gets excited for walks. We knew that there were certain things that we expect to do with a dog, that we can't do with a blind dog, like playing catch or fetch. We were okay with that, as there are other ways for us to bond.



CONTINUED: GIVING EASTER A SAFE SPACE

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THEN (2020) - Su Fern with Easter on one of his first outings from Mercylight. "He was smart, calm and surprisingly well-behaved outside. Once he got to know you, he really opened up."



NOW (2025) - Su Fern and Heng Tiong recently brought Easter, now blind, to Hort Park with friends Sheeba and Khulbear. From those early walks to this new chapter, he has found safety and confidence in a loving home.

SPECIAL FEATURE: SUPPORT SWAG!

STAY TUNED TO OUR SOCIAL CHANNELS FOR UPDATES ON HOW TO GET YOURS

Calendars will be available for orders around November. For shirts and caps, look out for adoption drives and popups.



Mercylight is dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming stray dogs so that they may get a second chance in life. Rescue efforts require a great amount of time, effort and manpower, but we believe that every single dog rescued makes it worthwhile.



Catch the next issue in December 2025!

