

無所遁形

wu2 suo3 dun4 xing2

Dog poo on the streets, public places and common areas of buildings are a big nuisance.

While people who fail to pick up after their dogs can be fined HK\$1,500, the law can be difficult to enforce as dog and owner have to be caught before they leave the scene.

A Canadian company has come up with an ingenious way of dealing with the problem. For a fee, it collects canine DNA samples with mouth swaps and stores them in a registry for future tracking of poo offense culprits.

The service is apparently useful as over 2,000 building managements were said to have signed up. With such a system, those who “foul the street by dog feces,” as the offense is formulated in our law books, would become “無所遁形” (wu2 suo3 dun4 xing2).

“無” is “no,” “nil,” “所” (suo3) “a location,” “a place,” “遁” (dun4) “to flee,” “to hide,” “to escape,” “to evade,” and

Idiom by Lon Yan

“形” (xing2) “appearance,” “form,” “shape.” “遁形” (dun4 xing2) is “to hide,” “to cover one’s traces,” “to cover your tracks,” “to vanish.”

Literally, “無所遁形” (wu2 suo3 dun4 xing2) is “no place to hide form,” “nowhere to hide”, which is what it means.

The idiom is usually used in respect of people who have done bad things and have something to hide.

When police conduct a thorough search in the neighborhood, the burglar would be “無所遁形” (wu2 suo3 dun4 xing2). When radar speed traps were laid, drivers going over the speed limit will also become “無所遁形” (wu2 suo3 dun4 xing2).

Terms containing the character “形” (xing2) include:

形容 (xing2 rong2) – to describe

形狀 (xing2 zhuang4) – shape; form

形成 (xing2 cheng2) – to form; to take shape

圓形 (yuan2 xing2) – a circle; round shape