



Ganesan is desperately looking for people to adopt the more than 100 dogs in his shelter.



Newborn puppies at Ganesan's shelter. Unless they find a home, they will end up on the streets or euthanised at the pound.

DBKL: Society is to blame

The increasing number of abandoned dogs are leaving authorities and animal rights organisations with no choice but to euthanise these canines that do not get adopted.

By GRACE CHEN
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IN A dark basement at the back alley of a row of shophouses in Brickfields is a dog shelter run by Ganesan Veerapen. It is literally a dog house as 100 canines live there.

A keeper, who sleeps with the dogs, goes round with a scoop every time an animal makes a deposit. Visitors have to manoeuvre their way through urine puddles. Naturally, the smell is as thick as the woofs and whines which fill the air.

After 12 years, the shelter's days are now numbered. Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has served Ganesan a notice following a spate of complaints. The pong has reportedly permeated to a bank lobby and tenants living on the upper floors are fed up of the night-time howling that robs them of their sleep.

At 61, Ganesan does not think he can continue running the shelter for long. Due to his straitened circumstances, the dogs are only fed once a day.

"I cannot bear the thought that the dogs will be taken away and put to sleep," said Ganesan who has desperately started seeking help from the public to adopt his dogs.

Public interest involved

DBKL Health and Environment Department deputy senior director Dr Umi Ahmad has confirmed that a notice was served to the dog shelter in response to public complaints.

The dogs will be sent to the DBKL animal pound in Jalan Loke Yew. They will be put to sleep after 14 days if they are not claimed by their owners or fail to get adopted.

Recently, instead of disposing the animals, DBKL has been sending them to Universiti Putra Malaysia



Dr Umi says the authorities are forced to take action for the sake of public interest.

to be part of medical studies on viruses.

Dr Umi said unless Ganesan can find a suitable place to relocate the shelter to, DBKL has to act in the public's interest.

Though there have been no reports of aggressive behaviour towards humans, she said the rounding up of the dogs is necessary as the shelter is behind a restaurant. There are also residents living one floor above.

"The shelter is in close proximity to a food preparation area.

"The unhygienic conditions can become an ideal situation for the transmission of diseases such as rabies, a viral disease that causes inflammation of the brain; tinea, a type of fungal skin infection and leptospirosis, which can be contracted by touching soil or water contaminated with the urine of an infected animal," she said.

Queried on DBKL's policy of putting the animals to sleep, Dr Umi said it is not economically possible for taxpayers to provide long-term care for them.

In 2015, DBKL together with its



Most probably the last scene a stray dog will see if it does not get adopted. A vet's table where it will be put to sleep by lethal injection.

appointed contractors, rounded up a total of 6,084 stray dogs.

In 2016, the food bills alone amounted to RM23,000, not including vet and catchers' fees.

Furthermore, the DBKL dog pound can only take in a maximum of 200 dogs, she pointed out.

Addressing the problem

Dr Umi said society is to blame for the stray dogs' heartbreaking end.

"Dogs do not become strays on their own. Abandonment is the biggest contributing factor. Dogs are dumped because owners don't want to care for them," she said. The root of the stray problem can be traced back to several sources including construction sites, auto workshops, farms, scrap yards and landfills, where dogs initially bred to guard some of these sites are left behind.

Factor in people who abandoned puppies because they are not cute enough, owners who have either

migrated, died, developed allergies or have lost interest in having a pet or caring for a sick dog and it is clear how the problem has become insurmountable and beyond the capabilities of local authorities to handle.

Compounding the problem is improper food waste disposal and the public's habit of feeding strays. "Stray dogs are attracted to the availability of food. This is why they often congregate at markets, hawkker centres, back alleys and parking lots," said Dr Umi.

As these dogs are usually not spayed, they multiply.

Trap, neuter and release

Although some animal rights advocates encourage the method of trap, neuter and then releasing (TNR) the dogs back to their original locations, this does not address the root causes.

Paws Animal Welfare Society shelter manager Edward Lim said although the dogs will not be able



Dr Umi says that dogs do not become strays on their own and that abandonment is the biggest contributing factor.



For every litter born, there is a chance that one of them will end up on the street. To prevent the problem of unwanted puppies, neutering is seen as the best solution.

to multiply, the greater issue that must be tackled is pet dumping.

Although the Animal Welfare Act 2015 has come into force on July 1, enforcement will be key.

Under the Act, owners who abandon their pets can be fined no less than RM20,000 and not more than RM100,000. They can also be jailed for not more than three years.

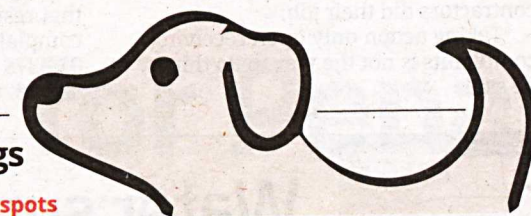
Lim said the worst culprits are factories and construction sites

which do not neuter their dogs. As a result, large packs of 10 to 15 dogs are eventually abandoned.

As many of these dogs have minimal contact with humans, they become feral strays.

"These category of dogs are almost impossible to rehome as they may be too aggressive," said Lim, adding that most are likely to be euthanised if rounded up by the authorities.

Usually, stray dogs that are



Stray dogs

Stray dog hotspots

Kuala Lumpur	Petaling Jaya
Jinjang Utara and Selatan	Desa Perangas Flats
PPR Sri Selangor	Desa Ria Flats
PPR Seri Semarak	Ara Damansara (construction sites)
Kampung Sungai Penchala (at the jungle fringes)	Desa Mentari
Taman Sentosa (near to commercial areas, flats and hawkker centres)	Taman Desaria
Taman Desaria	

Number of stray dogs rounded up

Year	MBPJ	DBKL
2015	(not available)	6,084
2016	766	4,686
2017	330 (up till June)	4,571 (up till July)

Selangor neutering subsidy fast facts

- Funded by the Selangor State Government to assist with reducing stray cats and dogs
- Fixed fund managed by PAWS Animal Welfare Society ("PAWS").
- Applicant must be born in Selangor or be a registered resident of Selangor (as per MyKad).
- Only one application form per animal and one vet receipt per dog.
- Each person is entitled to a maximum of five cats or dogs per week.
- A maximum of RM60-00 per cat and RM100-00 per dog only for neutering.
- Fund will cover neutering fees for approximately 800 cats and 800 dogs.

Paperwork for application procedure

- Print and fill out form from selangor-neuteringsubsidy.wordpress.com
- Original vet receipt.
- Photo collage of dog or cat in awake state before and after neutering.
- Photocopy of MyKad.

Post all to:
PAWS Animal Welfare Society, Pilmoor Estate, Subang Airport Road, 47200 Subang, Selangor

aggressive, sick or above five years old are euthanised as their chances of being adopted are minimal.

Towards a stray-free city

If pet owners were more responsible, the stray dog problem could be reduced by as much as 80% in the next five years, said Petaling Jaya City Council councillor Sean Oon.

Oon, who is overseeing a neutering subsidy programme by the Selangor government, feels the most effective way of curbing the stray dog problem is to control their breeding habits.

A fund of RM150,000 has been allocated by the state for the subsidised neutering programme which is being managed by Paws.

"If owners neuter their pets, we will not have so many unwanted dogs," said Oon.

So far, only 80 dogs and cats owners have made use of the subsidy provided by the state government.

To gain a better understanding of a city's pet population, Lim said there was a need to monitor breeders, pet shops and pet owners.

"Their numbers should be taken down together with the number of human residents whenever a census is being conducted.

"Make it compulsory for pet shops to microchip every animal they sell.

"So if the animal ends up on the street, it can be traced back to its owner," said Lim.