



## KMC Vet continues to obstruct humane methods to control dog population

Once again Dr. Jayasinghe, the KMC-Vet-surgeon, refused an offer by a very qualified Vet-team to help the city in controlling the dog-population through an effective Catch-Neuter-Return Programme.



TAPA (Tsunami Animal People Alliance) has been responsible for spaying/neutering 21,000 dogs in the past five years, mostly in the areas affected by the Tsunami, but also in Colombo in cooperation with 'Embark'. The offer to help out in Kandy was already refused by Dr. Jayasinghe two months ago, but on request of Governor T. Kobbekaduwa, it was offered once again this month. Not only the Governor of the Central Province, but also the Mayor of Kandy, would have gladly accepted this offer in order to get the stray-dog-problem tackled and to state funds, but the vet seems to have some kind right to object because dog-population control comes under his department. The only reason he gave for his objection was that, another group working in Kandy, would be interfering with his own programme. His own programme has started one and half years ago. It lasted three days and only a few hundred animals have been sterilized; after that nothing has been done.

Apart from that, why should another group working towards the same goal be regarded as an interference? Why is it not recognized as a support? In all other parts of the Central Province, the MOH offices conduct programmes and none of them have ever complained if SOFA or KACPAW had programmes in the same location. On the contrary, there has been total co-operation. In the Southern Province, TAPA is working together with the Galle Municipal Council to stabilize the dog-population.

However, the last word has not been spoken yet, because higher authorities are already questioning the decision of the KMC-Vet. There is still hope for the dogs of Kandy and the people of Kandy, who would like to see the dog-population reduced through humane methods. In the meantime, SOFA can be contacted by anyone, who would like to get his or her pet sterilized.

The same applies for street dogs, but we don't have a well-equipped and well-trained catching-team like TAPA, therefore, we can only help if the dogs are relatively docile and friendly.

To contact SOFA, please call 0777-426229 or 0602-801736.

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Treasurer,  
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Contributions to this page could be sent to <featureseditor@unl.upali.lk> or Features editor, *The Island*, Upali Newspapers Ltd. 223, Bloemendhal Rd, Colombo 13. Readers may also send photographs of families with their canine friends. 011-2497500

In this question-answer-model article, the writer answers some of the questions the general public frequently pose to animal-welfare workers about their work and their views concerning the stray dog population.

by **S. Devasirvadham**

(Continued from last week)

**Q. But you do admit, don't you, that money and education play a major role in the way people look after their dogs?**

**A.** One would think so, but sadly this is not always the case. Also, there is a difference between "education" and "education of the heart." For some, a pure-bred dog is a "status symbol" - something to show off, but a commodity they could easily discard, without a twinge of conscience, should they tire of it. Or perhaps, they want another hapless dog to display Pomeranian-cross, Alsatian-cross, Doberman Pinscher (yes) - we have seen them all, roaming the streets foraging for food.

A widespread tendency is to take a dog that begins to show signs of a condition - even if it is something like mange which could be treated easily - to a location far away from home and abandon it "collar and all." It is only when the condition progresses with time that it becomes evident that the dog is a disowned one. A common ploy is to leave behind a dog complete with its litter when moving house. Problem solved! In one shocking incident recently, a dog was dumped on the road while still giving birth to her pups.

**Q. Aren't the poor and the uneducated ever guilty of such misdeeds?**

**A.** They are, of course. But the point here is that it is even more inexcusable when those who are materially-privileged, or better-informed engage in such acts.

**Q. Are all these people really cruel?**

**A.** Some cannot be termed "cruel" but

plain indifferent or insensitive, which doesn't make it a lesser crime. Also, let us remember that they may not necessarily have in them the generosity to help people either. Two recently heard comments are as follows:

"It's okay. It's only a dog" - a statement made by a three-wheeler owner after driv-

ing over one. "If running over a dog is a crime, why aren't the police summoned when it happens?!" - the triumphantly-voiced argument of a young man. The fact that animals too feel pain and that they could seek justice if they possessed oral skills, power and money, is obviously beyond these individuals' power of comprehension.

### It's a unique relationship

# ...but to some, 'they are just dogs'



**Q. You must be enjoying rescuing stray dogs as you like animals. Are you right?**

**A.** There is no enjoyment involved here, only hard work and expenditure and

welfare worker and humbly requested her to help a dog that had been run over by a vehicle. The lady had complied only to be subjected to a vitriolic verbal attack by a passing member of the "healing profession," while she was keeping watch over it.

**Q. Then why are you engaged in such canine-welfare work?**

**A.** The look of utter misery in the eyes of a sick, starving or injured animal and the reward of seeing it transformed into a "well" or healthy animal.

**Q. Are you really an unappreciated lot?**

**A.** Not totally. We do receive encouragement and appreciation from some of the residents of our different communities and occasionally, these come from unexpected quarters, namely strangers. We also have a small network of people who hold the same views as ours. Professional help and advice from a few veterinary surgeons are also available when we seek them. Otherwise, it would not be possible to carry on with the work. Having said that, we must also mention that there is plenty of room for greater support from the general public and certain institutions, which is what we are trying to obtain.

**Q. How does the work done by canine-welfare associations and lay individuals benefit society as a whole?**

**A.** It helps to ensure a safer environment for people in addition to a happier one for canines. The service rendered to the community by some canine-welfare organizations in the island, through regular stray-dog vaccination and sterilization projects, is an example.

A concrete example is found in the programme carried out by TAPA (Tsunami Animal-People Alliance) through a team headed by Dr. T. Soorasena.

This Galle-based team gives anti-rabies vaccines to cats and dogs and also performs surgeries to keep the stray animal population down, all free of charge. The team operates, primarily in tsunami-affected areas and elsewhere in the Island on request, if the available funds permit.

The work is done on a monthly (20 days) area-rotation basis. The target of the project in each location is as follows:

the number of surgeries to be performed - 500 the number of anti-rabies vaccines to be given - 500 (+ a few more if necessary).

Even when operating individually, a lay canine-welfare worker takes immediate steps to get the rescued dog vaccinated against rabies and other major diseases, prior to embarking on any other form of care, on veterinary advice.

Next week: How should a community take care of stray dogs in the area?



## Chinese city to introduce one-dog policy

The southern Chinese city of Guangzhou is to introduce a one dog per house policy from July 1, angering local dog owners.

And families with two or more dogs will have to decide which one gets to stay. "It's a cruel regulation. These dogs are like family. How can you keep one and get rid of the others?" said Mrs Chen, who declined to give her full name because she feared the police would track her down and seize the dogs.

Such dog controls have touched off resentment among urban - mostly new middle class - Chinese in other cities. The Guangzhou measure comes as many are worrying about the economy, and there's potential for the regulation to trigger a public backlash.

The regulation appears to be part of an effort to control stray dogs in Guangzhou, once known as Canton. An hour north of Hong Kong by train, it is one of the richest cities in China and has a rapidly growing middle class that can afford to own dogs.

Many of the first-time pet owners do not bother to spay or neuter their animals and are new to the burdens of keeping an animal. The canines often end up on the street when their owners grow tired of raising a cute puppy that grew up into a big mutt and constantly demands care.

Guangzhou is also preparing to host the Asian Games next year, and crews have been scrubbing down and sprucing up the city of 12 million people. Reducing



Guangzhou will start to implement a one-dog policy for each household in the city from July 1

the dog population will likely mean cleaner sidewalks.

People were quick to react to the regulation when it was announced in March, said Mao Mao, who six years ago founded a shelter for stray dogs called Family of the Pet. She said that before March, she would receive only a few calls a month from dog owners who wanted to give up pets.

"Since March, every day we get about 10 calls a day," said the woman, who takes in only strays and advises pet owners how to find new homes for their animals.

"I'm afraid there are going to be many more stray dogs in July when the one-dog regulation becomes effective," she said.

Many other Chinese cities, including Beijing, have long had one-dog policies. Officials commonly launch mass roundups of dogs when the canine population is deemed too big or infected with rabies and other diseases. In 2006, Beijing authorities caught 29,000 unregistered dogs in one month - a campaign that sparked public anger and protest.

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