

Rescue the animals too

IT'S that time of the year again – the all too familiar season of floods.

Statistics by the National Disaster Management Agency (NaDMA) show that we've had a couple of bad episodes of floods in the last 90 years. In a recent radio interview with Perak FM, an official from Jabatan Hal Ehwal Khas Perak (Jasa) said Malaysia had experienced no less than 16 episodes of severe flooding from 1926 to 2014.

Severe floods leave a huge impact on the economy and infrastructure, affecting human life and incurring damages to assets and belongings and the loss of pets and livestock as well.

Often, the main focus of the disaster relief teams is to save the people affected by floods and not much emphasis is placed on saving livestock or pets. Even if these animals are rescued, they are not allowed to be placed in the evacuation centres for hygiene and health reasons. More often than not, livestock are left behind to survive on their own in the floodwater.

Pets also face the same fate. Those that do not have access to



higher ground could be suddenly swept away in the strong current of the flood. If they do manage to stay afloat, most of these animals would die from starvation or hypothermia after being in the floodwater for a long time. They could also be hit by fallen trees, floating debris or piles of rubbish or get caught between branches and drown.

Carcasses of animals, besides emitting strong foul odour, harbour microorganisms that pose a major threat to health, hence these must be properly disposed of as soon as possible.

The Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) announced in 2015 the proposal to introduce a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for saving and rehabilitat-

ing livestock before, during and after disasters.

The SOP, according to DVS, will be based on the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS), a set of international instructions for the design, implementation and assessment of livestock interventions to assist people affected by humanitarian crises both natural and man-made.

It is hoped that this laudable move will help minimise losses suffered by farmers who depend on livestock for their economic well-being when disasters like floods strike.

The welfare and wellbeing of animals in disaster-afflicted areas in this country must be included in future national disaster mitigation and disaster preparedness plans.

But until those efforts materialise, we applaud the rescue and rehabilitation efforts done by animal lovers, clubs and volunteers during and after the floods.

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