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

In a dark basement at the back alley of a row of shophouses in Brickfields is a dog shelter run by Ganesan Perumal. It literally is a dog house as 100 canines live there.

A keeper, who sleeps with the dogs, goes round with a sweep every time an animal makes a deposit. Owners have to muzzle their way through urine puddles. Normally the smell is so thick as to make air unbreathable.

After 12 years, the shelter's days are now numbered. Rooms Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) has served Ganesan a notice to vacate the premises as complaints from the public are escalating. The pooch has reportedly been sent to a cattery and tenants living on the upper floor are fed up of the noise.

"I cannot bear the thought that the dogs will be put down," said Ganesan, who is putting out notices seeking help from the public to adopt his dogs.

Public interest involved

DBKL Health and Environment Department deputy senior director Dr Umi Rama A. said the public is not being proactive in helping to solve the problem.

"The authorities are trying to ensure that the public is not the root cause of stray dogs," Dr Umi said.

Most probably the last name 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.

"It is literally a place of last resort for these dogs," said Dr Umi.

"The shelter is in close proximity to a food preparation area. The stagnant conditions can become an ideal situation for the transmission of diseases such as rabies, a viral disease that causes inflammation of the brain tissue, a type of fungal skin infection and leprosy, which can be contracted by touching soil or water contaminated with the urine of an infected animal," she said.

"DBKL policy of putting the animals to sleep, Dr Umi said it is not economically possible for taxpayers to provide long-term care for these dogs. In 2015, DBKL together with its appointed contractors, rounded up a total of 4,634 stray dogs. In 2016, the food bills alone amounted to RM53,000, not including vet and refusers' fees. Furthermore, the DBKL dog pound can only take in a maximum of 200 dogs, which means they are also resident living one floor above.

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

"These category of dogs are impossible to control. Their numbers should be taken into consideration. Whether they are aggressive, sick or above five years old are euthanised as their chances of being adopted are minimal. The biggest contributing factor is pet dumping. The next five years, said Petaling Jaya Municipal Council (MBPJ) animal and one vet receipt per dog. Pet shops to microchip every animal before and after they sell.

Towards a stray-free city

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Justice Minister Dr Abdul Hadi Awang announced that 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 RM5,000 and not more than RM50,000. They can also be jailed for not more than three years.

Dr Lim said 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.

"If pets were more responsible, the stray dog problem would be reduced by as much as 80% in the next five years," said Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) councillor Sean Ooi.

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

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"Newborn puppies are put to sleep," said Ganesan, adding that most are likely euthanised if round up by the authorities.

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