

## Pet Owners Must Vaccinate Their Dogs And Ensure They Get Their Regular Booster Shots To Protect Them

K A Shaji | TMN

If you have not as yet vaccinated your pet dog, it's high time you did for doctors at the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital (CMCH) say, that 20 per cent of dogs that test positive for rabies are pets. Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University say that 40 per cent of the 72 dogs that tested positive for rabies last year were pets. Given these alarming statistics, vaccinating pets should be a prerogative for owners to protect themselves from rabies. Even corporation officials agree that stray dogs alone are not responsible for the spread of rabies.

M Raja Padamanabhan from Kuniamuthur was unfortunate to have lost his pug to rabies two weeks ago, even though he had vaccinated it. The pug had failed to develop immunity to the virus and succumbed to the disease. The pug had come in contact with a stray dog infected with rabies as the servant was taking it for its daily walk.

"Vaccination is a must for pet dogs. Each pet must be vaccinated within 40 days of its birth and boosters must be administered at regular intervals," advises Keerthana George from Help Animal and Rescue Trust. According to her, many pedigree dogs become susceptible to the disease due to delayed treatment or lack of awareness among owners. Sources in veterinary hospitals say that it is not uncommon for pets to be bitten not only by stray dogs but also by squirrels and rats. Only immediate treatment can protect them from death, they say.

"Even Labradors and German shepherds are vulnerable to rabies. A pet must be vaccinated once a year and its immunity levels must be maintained," says Mini Vasudevan, managing trustee of Humane Animal Society. "Don't give your pets a free reign outside and servants must be sensitized," she added.

"If you have money, it's easy to buy a dog. But its safekeeping needs expertise. All family members must be aware about how to protect the health of their pet," says Keerthana. The care less attitude of owners is one of the main reasons for the increasing incidence of rabies in the city. "Many owners are lazy to take their dog for a daily walk. They prefer to let the dog out on its own. This is very dangerous as you will never know if your pet connected with a stray dog with rabies," said a pathologist.

"Dogs have the habit of poking their nose into everything. This might attract the attention of a rabid dog," says Dr Jayaparakash from Chennai's JP Pet Specialty Hospital.

Doctors said even a vaccinated dog that is attacked by a rabid one needs to be brought in for post-bite vaccine. "Antibodies produced by the vaccine are usually weak and it takes three weeks for the immunity to set in. So it is better to be safe," says Dr Prathapan, dean of Madras Veterinary College.

# PROTECTING YOUR PET FROM RABIES



## DEADLY BITE

Data from government hospitals show that deaths have been under-reported

▶ According to statistics available with the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, 40 per cent of the 72 dogs that tested positive for rabies last year were pets

▶ Dogs can be vaccinated at the completion of three months, and given a booster shot after another three months

▶ Each pet must be vaccinated within 40 days of its birth

IF YOUR DOG IS BITTEN OR EVEN SCRATCHED BY ANOTHER DOG

▶ Immediately wash the wound with water and soap for 10 minutes

▶ Rush it to the nearest veterinary clinic/ hospital for a post-bite vaccine

▶ If you are bitten by a dog showing symptoms of rabies, follow the above procedure and take anti-rabies vaccine and the following four shots as per schedule



It's easy to buy a dog. But its safekeeping needs expertise. Family members must know how to protect their pets

Keerthana George | HELP ANIMAL AND RESCUE TRUST

## SYMPTOMS OF RABIES

Animals with rabies suffer brain deterioration and tend to behave aggressively, increasing the chances that they will bite another animal or a person and transmit the disease

## Sterilisation is key to curb stray dog menace

As the stray dog population is steadily increasing in the city, the risk of exposure to dog bite and rabies has increased manifold. According to the city corporation, the number of stray dogs in the city has recently exceeded one lakh. Doctors at Coimbatore Medical College Hospital (CMCH) say that they treat 20 to 25 fresh cases daily. Dogs pervade most streets, especially at night, leaving motorists, especially bikers at their mercy. Children are also susceptible to dog bites.

City corporation's additional animal birth control centre coming up in Ukkadam will

help sterilize and rehabilitate more street dogs. Corporation commissioner T K Ponnusamy says that they have invested Rs 25 lakh in the centre which is being built on 20 cents of land. They are presently in the process of building sheds and cages. Once construction is completed, its operation will be vested with a city NGO, he added.

Packs of stray dogs can be seen roaming around in most parts of the city including government offices. As it is difficult to identify those infected with rabies, residents panic whenever a street dog approaches them. Cases of dog bites are on the rise, despite

corporation efforts to sterilize them," points out N Radhakrishnan, who runs an advertising firm in Gandhipuram.

According to Sivaparakasham, 80 to 120 anti-rabies vaccinations are administered daily at CMCH. As it is the only fully equipped hospital in the city to treat rabies, people have no other choice but to go there for treatment. Doctors at CMCH say that two rabies related deaths were recorded in the last two months at the hospital. Lack of immediate medical care is fatal in such cases. The victims had come to the hospital at an advanced stage.

According to animal rights

activists, the corporation centre and rehabilitation centre at Seeranaicken Playam is not fully active. Its operations could be strengthened by deploying more personnel. The corporation and two NGOs, the Humane Animal society (HAS) and People for Animals (PFA) oversee its operations.

According to a veterinarian involved in the sterilizing process, at least 15,000 stray dogs need to be sterilized in the city annually, but they are able to reach out to only a fraction of them. One corporation officer even admitted that the entire sterilization process was a total waste of money and resources.