

# Fear of rabies rises in city as stray dogs rule streets

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Coimbatore: As complaints regarding stray dog menace shoot up in the city, NGOs here have come up with a plan to involve dog lovers to tackle it.

With another dog bite case reported on Saturday from town hall, Mini Vasudevan of Human Animal Society said serious steps had to be undertaken as the number of dog bites had only increased in the past one year. "I got a call from the Town Hall area on Saturday about the incident. We captured the dog and have kept it under observation," she said.

Such cases have only increased, the activist said. "We have been entrusted with just 20 wards and been sterilising street dogs regularly. But, another NGO, in-charge of the remaining 80 wards, has not done any sterilisation activity in the last one year. We have got nearly 17 such complaints so far and of them 16 have been confirmed as rabies infected dogs," Mini Vasudevan told TOI.

However, the civic authorities disagreed and said that there was no proof of rabies infected dogs in the city. City health officer K Santhosh Kumar said the number was exaggerated and there was not a single rabies case reported from the city. "They need to provide evidence of rabies incidence. Rabies is a very serious issue and if this was true, we would have taken it seriously and taken steps. We have authorised NGOs with this task and they have to take steps to sterilise and vaccinate the dogs," he said.

Kalpana Vasudevan of People For Animals Unit II said she was away for three months but had appointed employees to

complete the task. "So far, we have sterilized 19,942 dogs. There are as many as 37,000 stray dogs in the city," she said.

"We have a new plan now. We will employ one animal lover or people who feed the dogs as in charge of wards. We have created a database of such people. So far, 10 people have come forward. We will ensure that these people will look after each ward and ensure all dogs are sterilised," she said.

Meanwhile, sources at the Coimbatore Medical College and Hospital told TOI that as many as 30 to 40 people are administered anti-rabies vaccine a day at the facility alone.